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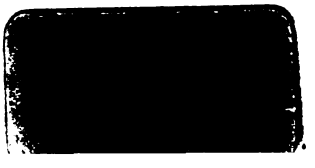

THE

WORKS

OF

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

A NEW EDITION

IN TWELVE VOLUMES.

WITH

AN ESSAY ON HIS LIFE AND GENIUS,

BY ARTHUR MURPHY, ESQ.

VOLUME THE SIXTH.

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ORIGINAL ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

FIRST EDITION 1779—1780.

THE Booksellers having determined to publish a Body of English Poetry, I was persuaded to promise them a Preface to the Works of each Author; an undertaking, as it was then presented to my mind, not very extensive or difficult.

My purpose was only to have allotted to every Poet an Advertisement, like those which we find in the French Miscellanies, containing a few dates and a general character: but I have been led beyond my intention, I hope, by the honest desire of giving useful pleasure.

In this minute kind of History, the succession of facts is not easily discovered; and I am not without suspicion that some of Dryden's works are placed in wrong years. I have followed Langbaine, as the best authority for his plays; and if I shall hereafter obtain a more correct chronology, will publish it: but I do not yet know that my account is erroneous.*

* Langbaine's authority will not support the dates assigned to Dryden's Plays. These are now rectified in the margin by references to the original Editions, the only guides to be relied on. R.

Dryden's Remarks on Rymer have been somewhere * printed before. The former edition I have not seen. This was transcribed for the press from his own manuscript.

As this undertaking was occasional and unforeseen, I must be supposed to have engaged in it with less provision of materials than might have been accumulated by longer premeditation. Of the later writers, at least, I might, by attention and enquiry, have gleaned many particulars, which would have diversified and enlivened my Biography. These omissions, which it is now useless to lament, have been often supplied by the kindness of Mr. Steevens and other friends; and great assistance has been given me by Mr. Spence's Collections, of which I consider the communication as a favour worthy of publick acknowledgment.

* In the Edition of Beaumont and Fletcher, by Mr. Colman. R.

COWLEY.

THE Life of Cowley, notwithstanding the penury of English biography, has been written by Dr. Sprat, an author whose pregnancy of imagination and elegance of language have deservedly set him high in the ranks of literature; but his zeal of friendship, or ambition of eloquence, has produced a funeral oration rather than a history: he has given the character, not the life, of Cowley; for he writes with so little detail, that scarcely any thing is distinctly known, but all is shewn confused and enlarged through the mist of panegyrick.

ABRAHAM COWLEY was born in the year one thousand six hundred and eighteen. His father was a grocer, whose condition Dr. Sprat conceals under the general appellation of a citizen; and, what would probably not have been less carefully suppressed, the omission of his name in the register of St. Dunstan's parish gives reason to suspect that his father was a sectary. Whoever he was, he died before the birth of his son, and consequently left him to the care of

his mother; whom Wood represents as struggling earnestly to procure him a literary education, and who, as she lived to the age of eighty, had her solicitude rewarded by seeing her son eminent, and, I hope, by seeing him fortunate, and partaking his prosperity. We know at least, from Sprat's account, that he always acknowledged her care, and justly paid the dues of filial gratitude.

In the window of his mother's apartment lay Spenser's Fairy Queen; in which he very early took delight to read, till by feeling the charms of verse, he became, as he relates, irrecoverably a poet. Such are the accidents which, sometimes remembered, and perhaps sometimes forgotten, produce that particular designation of mind, and propensity for some certain science or employment, which is commonly called Genius. The true Genius is a mind of large general powers, accidentally determined to some particular direction. Sir Joshua Reynolds, the great painter of the present age, had the first fondness for his art excited by the perusal of Richardson's treatise.

By his mother's solicitation he was admitted into Westminster-school, where he was soon distinguished. He was wont, says Sprat, to relate, "That he had this defect in his memory at that time, that his teachers never could bring it to retain the ordinary rules of grammar."

This is an instance of the natural desire of man to propagate a wonder. It is surely very difficult to tell any thing as it was heard, when Sprat could not refrain from amplifying a commodious incident, though the book to which he prefixed his narrative

contained its confutation. A memory admitting some things, and rejecting others, an intellectual digestion that concocted the pulp of learning, but refused the husks, had the appearance of an instinctive elegance, of a particular provision made by Nature for literary politeness. But in the author's own honest relation, the marvel vanishes: he was, he says, such "an enemy to all constraint, that his master never could prevail on him to learn the rules without book." He does not tell that he could not learn the rules; but that, being able to perform his exercises without them, and being an "enemy to constraint," he spared himself the labour.

Among the English poets, Cowley, Milton, and Pope, might be said "to lisp in numbers;" and have given such early proofs, not only of powers of language, but of comprehension of things, as to more tardy minds seem scarcely credible. But of the learned puerilities of Cowley there is no doubt, since a volume of his poems was not only written, but printed in his thirteenth year*; containing, with other poetical compositions, "The tragical History of Pyramus and Thisbe," written when he was ten years old; and "Constantia and Philetus," written two years after.

While he was yet at school he produced a comedy called "Love's Riddle," though it was not published till he had been some time at Cambridge. This

* This volume was not published before 1633, when Cowley was fifteen years old. Dr. Johnson, as well as former Biographers, seems to have been misled by the portrait of Cowley being by mistake marked with the age of thirteen years. R.

comedy is of the pastoral kind, which requires no acquaintance with the living world, and therefore the time at which it was composed adds little to the wonders of Cowley's minority.

In 1636, he was removed to Cambridge*, where he continued his studies with great intenseness; for he is said to have written, while he was yet a young student, the greater part of his "Davideis;" a work of which the materials could not have been collected without the study of many years, but by a mind of the greatest vigour and activity.

Two years after his settlement at Cambridge he published "Love's Riddle," with a poetical dedication to Sir Kenelm Digby; of whose acquaintance all his contemporaries seem to have been ambitious; and "Naufragium Joculare," a comedy written in Latin, but without due attention to the ancient models; for it is not loose verse, but mere prose. It was printed with a dedication in verse, to Dr. Comber, master of the college; but, having neither the facility of a popular nor the accuracy of a learned work, it seems to be now universally neglected.

At the beginning of the civil war, as the Prince passed through Cambridge in his way to York, he was entertained with a representation of the "Guardian," a comedy, which Cowley says was neither written nor acted, but rough-drawn by him, and repeated by the scholars. That this comedy was printed during his absence from his country, he appears to have considered as injurious to his repu-

* He was candidate this year at Westminster-school for election to Trinity-college, but proved unsuccessful. N.

tation; though, during the suppression of the theatres, it was sometimes privately acted with sufficient approbation.

In 1643, being now master of arts, he was, by the prevalence of the parliament, ejected from Cambridge, and sheltered himself at St. John's College in Oxford; where, as is said by Wood, he published a satire, called "The Puritan and Papist," which was only inserted in the last collection of his Works*; and so distinguished himself by the warmth of his loyalty and the elegance of his conversation, that he gained the kindness and confidence of those who attended the King, and amongst others of Lord Falkland, whose notice cast a lustre on all to whom it was extended.

About the time when Oxford was surrendered to the Parliament, he followed the Queen to Paris, where he became secretary to the Lord Jermyn, afterwards Earl of St. Alban's, and was employed in such correspondence as the Royal cause required, and particularly in cyphering and decyphering the letters that passed between the King and Queen; an employment of the highest confidence and honour. So wide was his province of intelligence, that, for several years, it filled all his days and two or three nights in the week.

In the year 1647, his "Mistress" was published; for he imagined, as he declared in his preface to a

* In the first edition of this Life, Dr. Johnson wrote, "which was never inserted in any collection of his Works;" but he altered the expression when the Lives were collected into volumes. The satire was added to Cowley's Works by the *particular direction* of Dr. Johnson. N.

subsequent edition, that "Poets are scarcely thought freemen of their company without paying some duties, or obliging themselves to be true to love."

This obligation to amorous ditties owes, I believe, its original to the fame of Petrarch, who, in an age rude and uncultivated, by his tuneful homage to his Laura, refined the manners of the lettered world, and filled Europe with love and poetry. But the basis of all excellence is truth: he that professes love ought to feel its power. Petrarch was a real lover, and Laura doubtless deserved his tenderness. Of Cowley, we are told by Barnes*, who had means enough of information, that, whatever he may talk of his own inflammability, and the variety of characters by which his heart was divided, he in reality was in love but once, and then never had resolution to tell his passion.

This consideration cannot but abate in some measure the reader's esteem for the work and the author. To love excellence, is natural; it is natural likewise for the lover to solicit reciprocal regard by an elaborate display of his own qualifications. The desire of pleasing has in different men produced actions of heroism, and effusions of wit; but it seems as reasonable to appear the champion as the poet of an "airy nothing," and to quarrel as to write for what Cowley might have learned from his master Pindar to call "the dream of a shadow."

It is surely not difficult, in the solitude of a college, or in the bustle of the world, to find useful studies and serious employment. No man needs to

* Barnesii Anacreontem. Dr. J.

be so burthened with life as to squander it in voluntary dreams of fictitious occurrences. The man that sits down to suppose himself charged with treason or peculation, and heats his mind to an elaborate purgation of his character from crimes which he was never within the possibility of committing, differs only by the infrequency of his folly from him who praises beauty which he never saw; complains of jealousy which he never felt; supposes himself sometimes invited, and sometimes forsaken; fatigues his fancy, and ransacks his memory, for images which may exhibit the gaiety of hope, or the gloominess of despair; and dresses his imaginary Chloris or Phyllis sometimes in flowers fading as her beauty, and sometimes in gems lasting as her virtues.

At Paris, as secretary to Lord Jermyn, he was engaged in transacting things of real importance with real men and real women, and at that time did not much employ his thoughts upon phantoms of gallantry. Some of his letters to Mr. Bennet, afterwards Earl of Arlington, from April to December, in 1650, are preserved in "Miscellanea Aulica," a collection of papers published by Brown. These letters, being written like those of other men whose minds are more on things than words, contribute no otherwise to his reputation than as they shew him to have been above the affectation of unseasonable elegance, and to have known that the business of a statesman can be little forwarded by flowers of rhetorick.

One passage, however, seems not unworthy of some notice. Speaking of the Scotch treaty then in agitation;

"The Scotch treaty," says he, "is the only thing now in which we are vitally concerned; I am one of the last hopers, and yet cannot now abstain from believing that an agreement will be made; all people upon the place incline to that of union. The Scotch will moderate something of the rigour of their demands; the mutual necessity of an accord is visible, the King is persuaded of it. And to tell you the truth (which I take to be an argument above all the rest), Virgil has told the same thing to that purpose."

This expression from a secretary of the present time would be considered as merely ludicrous, or at most as an ostentatious display of scholarship; but the manners of that time were so tinged with superstition, that I cannot but suspect Cowley of having consulted on this great occasion the Virgilian lots*,

* Consulting the Virgilian Lots, Sortes Virgilianæ, is a method of Divination by the opening of Virgil, and applying to the circumstances of the peruser the first passage in either of the two pages that he accidentally fixes his eye on. It is said, that King Charles I. and Lord Falkland, being in the Bodleian library, made this experiment of their future fortunes, and met with passages equally ominous to each.

That of the KING was the following:

At bello audacis populi vexatus & armis,
Finibus extorris, complexu avulsus Iuli,
Auxilium imploret, videatque indigna suorum
Funera, nec, cum se sub leges pacis iniquæ
Tradiderit, regno aut optata luce fruatur:
Sed cadat ante diem, mediaque inhumatus arena.

Æneid IV. 615.

Yet let a race untam'd, and haughty foes,
His peaceful entrance with dire arms oppose,

and to have given some credit to the answer of his oracle.

Oppress'd with numbers in th' unequal field,
His men discourag'd and himself expell'd:
Let him for succour sue from place to place,
Torn from his subjects and his son's embrace.
First let him see his friends in battle slain,
And their untimely fate lament in vain:
And when, at length, the cruel war shall cease,
On hard conditions may he buy his peace;
Nor let him then enjoy supreme command,
But fall untimely by some hostile hand,
And lie unburied on the barren sand.

DRYDEN.

Lord FALKLAND's:

Non hæc, O Palla, dederas promissa parenti,
Cautius ut sævo velles te credere Marti.
Haud ignarus eram, quantum nova gloria in armis,
Et prædulce decus primo certamine posset.
Primitiæ juvenis miseræ, bellique propinqui
Dura rudimenta, et nulli exaudita Deorum,
Vota precesque meæ!

Æneid XI. 152.

O Pallas, thou hast fail'd thy plighted word,
To fight with caution, not to tempt the sword;
I warn'd thee, but in vain, for well I knew
What perils youthful ardour would pursue,
That boiling blood would carry thee too far,
Young as thou wert to dangers, raw to war.
O curst essay of arms, disastrous doom,
Prelude of bloody fields and fights to come!
Hard elements of unauspicious war,
Vain vows to Heaven, and unavailing care!

DRYDEN.

Hoffman, in his Lexicon, gives a very satisfactory account of this practice of seeking fates in books: and says that it was used by the Pagans, the Jewish Rabbins, and even the early Christians; the latter taking the New Testament for their oracle. H.

Some years afterwards, " business," says Sprat, " passed of course into other hands;" and Cowley, being no longer useful at Paris, was in 1656 sent back into England, that, " under pretence of privacy and retirement, he might take occasion of giving notice of the posture of things in this nation."

Soon after his return to London, he was seized by some messengers of the usurping powers who were sent out in quest of another man; and being examined, was put into confinement, from which he was not dismissed without the security of a thousand pounds given by Dr. Scarborough.

This year he published his Poems, with a preface, in which he seems to have inserted something suppressed in subsequent editions, which was interpreted to denote some relaxation of his loyalty. In this preface he declares, that " his desire had been for some days past, and did still very vehemently continue, to retire himself to some of the American plantations, and to forsake this world for ever."

From the obloquy which the appearance of submission to the usurpers brought upon him, his biographer has been very diligent to clear him, and indeed it does not seem to have lessened his reputation. His wish for retirement we can easily believe to be undissembled; a man harassed in one kingdom, and persecuted in another, who, after a course of business that employed all his days and half his nights, in cyphering and decyphering, comes to his own country and steps into a prison, will be willing enough to retire to some place of quiet and of safety. Yet let neither our reverence for a genius,

nor our pity for a sufferer, dispose us to forget, that, if his activity was virtue, his retreat was cowardice.

He then took upon himself the character of Physician, still, according to Sprat, with intention "to dissemble the main design of his coming over;" and, as Mr. Wood relates, "complying with the men then in power (which was much taken notice of by the royal party), he obtained an order to be created Doctor of Physick; which being done to his mind (whereby he gained the ill-will of some of his friends), he went into France again, having made a copy of verses on Oliver's death."

This is no favourable representation, yet even in this not much wrong can be discovered. How far he complied with the men in power, is to be enquired before he can be blamed. It is not said that he told them any secrets, or assisted them by intelligence or any other act. If he only promised to be quiet, that they in whose hands he was might free him from confinement, he did what no law of society prohibits.

The man whose miscarriage in a just cause has put him in the power of his enemy may, without any violation of his integrity, regain his liberty, or preserve his life, by a promise of neutrality: for, the stipulation gives the enemy nothing which he had not before: the neutrality of a captive may be always secured by his imprisonment or death. He that is at the disposal of another may not promise to aid him in any injurious act, because no power can compel active obedience. He may engage to do nothing, but not to do ill.

There is reason to think that Cowley promised little. It does not appear that his compliance gained him confidence enough to be trusted without security, for the bond of his bail was never cancelled; nor that it made him think himself secure, for, at that dissolution of government which followed the death of Oliver, he returned into France, where he resumed his former station, and staid till the Restoration.

"He continued," says his biographer, "under these bonds, till the general deliverance;" it is therefore to be supposed, that he did not go to France, and act again for the King, without the consent of his bondsman; that he did not shew his loyalty at the hazard of his friend, but by his friend's permission.

Of the verses on Oliver's death, in which Wood's narrative seems to imply something encomiastick, there has been no appearance. There is a discourse concerning his government, indeed, with verses intermixed, but such as certainly gained its author no friends among the abettors of usurpation.

A doctor of physick however he was made at Oxford in December 1657; and in the commencement of the Royal Society, of which an account has been given by Dr. Birch, he appears busy among the experimental philosophers with the title of Dr. Cowley.

There is no reason for supposing that he ever attempted practice: but his preparatory studies have contributed something to the honour of his country. Considering Botany as necessary to a physician, he retired into Kent to gather plants; and as the predo-

minance of a favourite study affects all subordinate operations of the intellect, Botany in the mind of Cowley turned into Poetry. He composed in Latin several books on Plants, of which the first and second display the qualities of Herbs, in elegiac verse; the third and fourth, the beauties of Flowers in various measures; and the fifth and sixth, the uses of Trees, in heroic numbers.

At the same time were produced, from the same University, the two great poets, Cowley and Milton, of dissimilar genius, of opposite principles; but concurring in the cultivation of Latin Poetry, in which the English, till their works and May's Poem appeared*, seemed unable to contest the palm with any other of the lettered nations.

If the Latin performances of Cowley and Milton be compared (for May I hold to be superior to both), the advantage seems to lie on the side of Cowley. Milton is generally content to express the thoughts of the ancients in their language; Cowley, without much loss of purity or elegance, accommodates the diction of Rome to his own conceptions.

At the Restoration, after all the diligence of his long service, and with consciousness not only of the merit of fidelity, but of the dignity of great abilities, he naturally expected ample preferments; and, that he might not be forgotten by his own fault, wrote a Song of Triumph. But this was a time of such

* By May's Poem we are here to understand a continuation of Lucan's Pharsalia to the death of Julius Cæsar, by Thomas May, an eminent poet and historian, who flourished in the reigns of James and Charles I., and of whom a life is given in the Biographia Britannica. H.

general hope, that great numbers were inevitably disappointed; and Cowley found his reward very tediously delayed. He had been promised by both Charles the First and Second, the Mastership of the Savoy; "but he lost it," says Wood, "by certain persons, enemies to the Muses."

The neglect of the Court was not his only mortification; having by such alteration as he thought proper, fitted his old Comedy of "The Guardian" for the stage, he produced it* under the title of "The Cutter of Coleman-street†." It was treated on the stage with great severity, and was afterwards censured as a satire on the King's party.

Mr. Dryden, who went with Mr. Sprat to the first exhibition, related to Mr. Dennis, "that, when they told Cowley how little favour had been shewn him, he received the news of his ill success, not with so much firmness as might have been expected from so great a man."

What firmness they expected, or what weakness Cowley discovered, cannot be known. He that misses his end will never be as much pleased as he that attains it, even when he can impute no part of his failure to himself; and when the end is to please the multitude, no man perhaps has a right, in things admitting of gradation and comparison, to throw the

* 1663.

† Here is an error in the designation of this comedy, which our author copied from the title-page of the latter editions of Cowley's Works: the title of the play itself is without the article, "Cutter of Coleman-street," and that because a merry sharking fellow about the town, named Cutter, is a principal character in it. H.

whole blame upon his judges, and totally to exclude diffidence and shame by a haughty consciousness of his own excellence.

For the rejection of this play it is difficult now to find the reason: it certainly has, in a very great degree, the power of fixing attention and exciting merriment. From the charge of disaffection he exculpates himself in his preface, by observing how unlikely it is that, having followed the royal family through all their distresses, "he should chuse the time of their restoration to begin a quarrel with them." It appears, however, from the Theatrical Register of Downes, the Prompter, to have been popularly considered as a satire on the Royalists.

That he might shorten this tedious suspense, he published his pretensions and his discontent, in an ode called "The Complaint;" in which he styles himself the *melancholy* Cowley. This met with the usual fortune of complaints, and seems to have excited more contempt than pity.

These unlucky incidents are brought, maliciously enough, together in some stanzas, written about that time on the choice of a Laureat; a mode of satire, by which, since it was first introduced by Suckling, perhaps every generation of poets has been teazed.

Savoy-missing Cowley came into the court,
Making apologies for his bad play;
Every one gave him so good a report,
That Apollo gave heed to all he could say:
Nor would he have had, 'tis thought, a rebuke,
Unless he had done some notable folly:
Writ verses unjustly in praise of Sam Tuke,
Or printed his pitiful Melancholy.

His vehement desire of retirement now came again upon him. "Not finding," says the morose Wood, "that preferment conferred upon him which he expected, while others for their money carried away most places, he retired discontented into Surrey."

"He was now," says the courtly Sprat, "weary of the vexations and formalities of an active condition. He had been perplexed with a long compliance to foreign manners. He was satiated with the arts of a court; which sort of life, though his virtue made it innocent to him, yet nothing could make it quiet. Those were the reasons that moved him to follow the violent inclination of his own mind, which, in the greatest throng of his former business, had still called upon him, and represented to him the true delights of solitary studies, of temperate pleasures, and a moderate revenue below the malice and flatteries of fortune."

So differently are things seen! and so differently are they shewn! But actions are visible, though motives are secret. Cowley certainly retired; first to Barn-elms, and afterwards to Chertsey, in Surrey. He seems, however, to have lost part of his dread of the *hum of men* *. He thought himself now safe enough from intrusion, without the defence of mountains and oceans; and, instead of seeking shelter in America, wisely went only so far from the bustle of life as that he might easily find his way back, when solitude should grow tedious. His retreat was at first but slenderly accommodated; yet he soon

* L'Allegro of Milton. Dr. J.

obtained, by the interest of the Earl of St. Alban's and the Duke of Buckingham, such a lease of the Queen's lands as afforded him an ample income.

By the lovers of virtue and of wit it will be solicitously asked, if he now was happy. Let them peruse one of his letters accidentally preserved by Peck, which I recommend to the consideration of all that may hereafter pant for solitude.

TO DR. THOMAS SPRAT.

"Chertsey, May 21, 1665.

"The first night that I came hither I caught so great a cold, with a defluxion of rheum, as made me keep my chamber ten days. And, two after, had such a bruise on my ribs with a fall, that I am yet unable to move or turn myself in my bed. This is my personal fortune here to begin with. And, besides, I can get no money from my tenants, and have my meadows eaten up every night by cattle put in by my neighbours. What this signifies, or may come to in time, God knows; if it be ominous, it can end in nothing less than hanging. Another misfortune has been, and stranger than all the rest, that you have broke your word with me, and failed to come, even though you told Mr. Bois that you would. This is what they call *Monstri simile.* I do hope to recover my late hurt so farre within five or six days (though it be uncertain yet whether I shall ever recover it) as to walk about again. And then, methinks, you and I and *the Dean* might be

very merry upon St. Ann's Hill. You might very conveniently come hither the way of Hampton Town, lying there one night. I write this in pain, and can say no more: *Verbum sapienti.*"

He did not long enjoy the pleasure or suffer the uneasiness of solitude; for he died at the Porch-house* in Chertsey, in 1667, in the 49th year of his age.

He was buried with great pomp near Chaucer and Spenser; and King Charles pronounced, "That Mr. Cowley had not left behind him a better man in England." He is represented by Dr. Sprat as the most amiable of mankind; and this posthumous praise may safely be credited, as it has never been contradicted by envy or by faction.

Such are the remarks and memorials which I have been able to add to the narrative of Dr. Sprat; who, writing when the feuds of the civil war were yet recent, and the minds of either party were easily irritated, was obliged to pass over many transactions in general expressions, and to leave curiosity often unsatisfied. What he did not tell, cannot however now be known; I must therefore recommend the perusal of his work, to which my narration can be considered only as a slender supplement.

* Now in the possession of Mr. Clark, Alderman of London. Dr. J.—Mr. Clark was, in 1798, elected to the important office of Chamberlain of London; and has every year since been unanimously re-elected. N.

COWLEY, like other poets who have written with narrow views, and, instead of tracing intellectual pleasures in the minds of men, paid their court to temporary prejudices, has been at one time too much praised, and too much neglected at another.

Wit, like all other things subject by their nature to the choice of man, has its changes and fashions, and at different times takes different forms. About the beginning of the seventeenth century, appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets; of whom, in a criticism on the works of Cowley, it is not improper to give some account.

The metaphysical poets were men of learning, and to shew their learning was their whole endeavour: but, unluckily resolving to shew it in rhyme, instead of writing poetry they only wrote verses, and very often such verses as stood the trial of the finger better than of the ear; for the modulation was so imperfect, that they were only found to be verses by counting the syllables.

If the father of criticism has rightly denominated poetry τέχνη μιμητικὴ, *an imitative art*, these writers will, without great wrong, lose their right to the name of poets; for they cannot be said to have imitated any thing; they neither copied nature nor life; neither painted the forms of matter, nor represented the operations of intellect.

Those however who deny them to be poets, allow them to be wits. Dryden confesses of himself and his contemporaries, that they fall below Donne in wit; but maintains, that they surpass him in poetry.

If wit be well described by Pope, as being "that which has been often thought, but was never before so well expressed," they certainly never attained, nor ever sought it; for they endeavoured to be singular in their thoughts, and were careless of their diction. But Pope's account of wit is undoubtedly erroneous: he depresses it below its natural dignity, and reduces it from strength of thought to happiness of language.

If by a more noble and more adequate conception that be considered as wit which is at once natural and new, that which, though not obvious, is, upon its first production, acknowledged to be just; if it be that which he that never found it wonders how he missed; to wit of this kind the metaphysical poets have seldom risen. Their thoughts are often new, but seldom natural; they are not obvious, but neither are they just; and the reader, far from wondering that he missed them, wonders more frequently by what perverseness of industry they were ever found.

But wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer, may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Of wit, thus defined, they have more than enough. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtlety surprises; but the reader commonly thinks his improvement dearly bought, and, though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased.

From this account of their compositions it will be readily inferred, that they were not successful in representing or moving the affections. As they were wholly employed on something unexpected and surprising, they had no regard to that uniformity of sentiment which enables us to conceive and to excite the pains and the pleasure of other minds: they never enquired what, on any occasion, they should have said or done; but wrote rather as beholders than partakers of human nature; as Beings looking upon good and evil, impassive and at leisure; as Epicurean deities, making remarks on the actions of men, and the vicissitudes of life, without interest and without emotion. Their courtship was void of fondness, and their lamentation of sorrow. Their wish was only to say what they hoped had never been said before.

Nor was the sublime more within their reach than the pathetick; for they never attempted that comprehension and expanse of thought which at once fills the whole mind, and of which the first effect is sudden astonishment, and the second rational admiration. Sublimity is produced by aggregation, and littleness by dispersion. Great thoughts are always general, and consist in positions not limited by exceptions, and in descriptions not descending to minuteness. It is with great propriety that Subtlety, which in its original import means exility of particles, is taken in its metaphorical meaning for nicety of distinction. Those writers who lay on the watch for novelty could have little hope of greatness; for great things cannot have escaped former observation. Their attempts were always analytick; they broke every image into fragments; and could no more represent,

by their slender conceits and laboured particularities, the prospects of nature, or the scenes of life, than he who dissects a sun-beam with a prism can exhibit the wide effulgence of a summer noon.

What they wanted however of the sublime, they endeavoured to supply by hyperbole; their amplification had no limits; they left not only reason but fancy behind them; and produced combinations of confused magnificence, that not only could not be credited, but could not be imagined.

Yet great labour, directed by great abilities, is never wholly lost; if they frequently threw away their wit upon false conceits, they likewise sometimes struck out unexpected truth: if their conceits were far-fetched, they were often worth the carriage. To write on their plan it was at least necessary to read and think. No man could be born a metaphysical poet, nor assume the dignity of a writer, by descriptions copied from descriptions, by imitations borrowed from imitations, by traditional imagery, and hereditary similies, by readiness of rhyme, and volubility of syllables.

In perusing the works of this race of authors, the mind is exercised either by recollection or inquiry; either something already learned is to be retrieved, or something new is to be examined. If their greatness seldom elevates, their acuteness often surprises; if the imagination is not always gratified, at least the powers of reflection and comparison are employed; and in the mass of materials which ingenious absurdity has thrown together, genuine wit and useful knowledge may be sometimes found buried perhaps in grossness of expression, but useful to those who

know their value; and such as, when they are expanded to perspicuity, and polished to elegance, may give lustre to works which have more propriety though less copiousness of sentiment.

This kind of writing, which was, I believe, borrowed from Marino and his followers, had been recommended by the example of Donne, a man of very extensive and various knowledge; and by Jonson, whose manner resembled that of Donne more in the ruggedness of his lines than in the cast of his sentiments.

When their reputation was high, they had undoubtedly more imitators than time has left behind. Their immediate successors, of whom any remembrance can be said to remain, were Suckling, Waller, Denham, Cowley, Cleiveland, and Milton. Denham and Waller sought another way to fame, by improving the harmony of our numbers. Milton tried the metaphysic style only in his lines upon Hobson the Carrier. Cowley adopted it, and excelled his predecessors, having as much sentiment and more musick. Suckling neither improved versification, nor abounded in conceits. The fashionable style remained chiefly with Cowley; Suckling could not reach it, and Milton disdained it.

CRITICAL REMARKS are not easily understood without examples; and I have therefore collected instances of the modes of writing by which this species of poets (for poets they were called by themselves and their admirers) was eminently distinguished.

As the authors of this race were perhaps more desirous of being admired than understood, they sometimes drew their conceits from recesses of learning not very much frequented by common readers of poetry. Thus Cowley on *Knowledge:*

The sacred tree 'midst the fair orchard grew;
The phœnix Truth did on it rest,
And built his perfum'd nest,
That right Porphyrian tree which did true logic shew.
Each leaf did learned notions give,
And th' apples were demonstrative:
So clear their colour and divine,
The very shade they cast did other lights outshine.

On Anacreon continuing a lover in his old age:

Love was with thy life entwin'd,
Close as heat with fire is join'd;
A powerful brand prescrib'd the date
Of thine, like Meleager's fate.
Th' antiperistasis of age
More enflam'd thy amorous rage.

In the following verses we have an allusion to a Rabbinical opinion concerning Manna:

Variety I ask not: give me one
To live perpetually upon.
The person Love does to us fit,
Like manna, has the taste of all in it.

Thus Donne shews his medicinal knowledge in some encomiastick verses:

In every thing there naturally grows
A Balsamum to keep it fresh and new,
If 'twere not injur'd by extrinsique blows;
Your youth and beauty are this balm in you.

But you, of learning and religion,
And virtue and such ingredients, have made
A mithridate, whose operation
Keeps off, or cures what can be done or said.

Though the following lines of Donne, on the last night of the year, have something in them too scholastick, they are not inelegant:

This twilight of two years, not past nor next,
Some emblem is of me, or I of this,
Who, meteor-like, of stuff and form perplext,
Whose what and where in disputation is,
If I should call me any thing, should miss.
I sum the years and me, and find me not
Debtor to th' old, nor creditor to th' new.
That cannot say, my thanks I have forgot,
Nor trust I this with hopes; and yet scarce true
This bravery is, since these times shew'd me you.

DONNE.

Yet more abstruse and profound is Donne's reflection upon Man as a Microcosm:

If men be worlds, there is in every one
Something to answer in some proportion
All the world's riches: and in good men, this
Virtue, our form's form, and our soul's soul is.

OF thoughts so far-fetched, as to be not only unexpected, but unnatural, all their books are full.

To a Lady, who wrote poesies for rings.

They, who above do various circles find,
Say, like a ring, th' equator Heaven does bind.
When Heaven shall be adorn'd by thee,
(Which then more Heaven than 'tis will be)

'Tis thou must write the poesy there,
For it wanteth one as yet,
Then the sun pass through 't twice a year,
The sun, which is esteem'd the god of wit.

COWLEY.

The difficulties which have been raised about identity in philosophy, are by Cowley with still more perplexity applied to Love:

Five years ago (says story) I lov'd you,
For which you call me most inconstant now;
Pardon me, madam, you mistake the man;
For I am not the same that I was then;
No flesh is now the same 'twas then in me,
And that my mind is chang'd yourself may see.
The same thoughts to retain still, and intents,
Were more inconstant far: for accidents
Must of all things most strangely inconstant prove,
If from one subject they t' another move;
My members then, the father members were
From whence these take their birth, which now are here.
If then this body love what th' other did,
'Twere incest, which by nature is forbid.

The love of different women is, in geographical poetry, compared to travels through different countries:

Hast thou not found each woman's breast
(The land where thou hast travelled)
Either by savages possest,
Or wild, and uninhabited?
What joy could'st take, or what repose,
In countries so unciviliz'd as those?

Lust, the scorching dog-star, here
Rages with immoderate heat;
Whilst Pride, the rugged Northern bear,
In others makes the cold too great.
And where these are temperate known,
The soil 's all barren sand, or rocky stone.

COWLEY.

A Lover, burnt up by his affection, is compared to Egypt:

The fate of Egypt I sustain,
And never feel the dew of rain
From clouds which in the head appear;
But all my too much moisture owe
To overflowings of the heart below.

COWLEY.

The lover supposes his lady acquainted with the ancient laws of augury and rites of sacrifice:

And yet this death of mine, I fear,
Will ominous to her appear:
When sound in every other part,
Her sacrifice is found without an heart.
For the last tempest of my death
Shall sigh out that too, with my breath.

That the chaos was harmonized, has been recited of old; but whence the different sounds arose remained for a modern to discover:

Th' ungovern'd parts no correspondence knew;
An artless war from thwarting motions grew;
Till they to number and fixt rules were brought.
Water and air he for the Tenor chose,
Earth made the Base; the Treble, flame arose.

COWLEY.

The tears of lovers are always of great poetical account; but Donne has extended them into worlds. If the lines are not easily understood, they may be read again.

On a round ball
A workman, that hath copies by, can lay
An Europe, Afric, and an Asia,
And quickly make that, which was nothing, all.
So doth each tear,
Which thee doth wear,
A globe, yea world, by that impression grow,
Till thy tears mixt with mine do overflow
This world, by waters sent from thee my heaven dissolved so.

On reading the following lines, the reader may perhaps cry out—*Confusion worse confounded.*

Here lies a she sun, and a he moon here,
She gives the best light to his sphere,
Or each is both, and all, and so
They unto one another nothing owe.

DONNE.

Who but Donne would have thought that a good man is a telescope?

Though God be our true glass through which we see
All, since the being of all things is he,
Yet are the trunks, which do to us derive
Things in proportion fit, by perspective
Deeds of good men; for by their living here,
Virtues, indeed remote, seem to be near.

Who would imagine it possible that in a very few lines so many remote ideas could be brought together?

Since 'tis my doom, Love's undershrieve,
Why this reprieve?
Why doth my she advowson fly
Incumbency?
To sell thyself dost thou intend
By candles end,
And hold the contrast thus in doubt,
Life's taper out?
Think but how soon the market fails,
Your sex lives faster than the males;
And if to measure age's span,
The sober Julian were th' account of man,
Whilst you live by the fleet Gregorian.

CLEIVELAND.

Of enormous and disgusting hyperboles, these may be examples:

By every wind, that comes this way,
Send me at least a sigh or two,
Such and so many I 'll repay
As shall themselves make winds to get to you.

COWLEY.

In tears I 'll waste these eyes,
By Love so vainly fed;
So lust of old the Deluge punished.

COWLEY.

All arm'd in brass, the richest dress of war,
(A dismal glorious sight!) he shone afar.
The sun himself started with sudden fright,
To see his beams return so dismal bright.

COWLEY.

An universal consternation:

His bloody eyes he hurls round, his sharp paws
Tear up the ground; then runs he wild about,
Lashing his angry tail and roaring out.
Beasts creep into their dens, and tremble there;
Trees, though no wind is stirring, shake with fear;
Silence and horror fill the place around;
Echo itself dares scarce repeat the sound.

COWLEY.

THEIR fictions were often violent and unnatural.

Of his Mistress bathing.

The fish around her crowded, as they do
To the false light that treacherous fishers shew,
And all with as much ease might taken be,
As she at first took me;
For ne'er did light so clear
Among the waves appear,
Though every night the sun himself set there.

COWLEY.

The poetical effect of a lover's name upon glass:

My name engrav'd herein
Doth contribute my firmness to this glass;
Which, ever since that charm, hath been
As hard as that which grav'd it was.

DONNE.

THEIR conceits were sentiments slight and trifling.

On an inconstant woman:

He enjoys the calmy sunshine now,
And no breath stirring hears,
In the clear heaven of thy brow,
No smallest cloud appears.

He sees thee gentle, fair and gay,
And trusts the faithless April of thy May.

COWLEY.

Upon a paper written with the juice of lemon, and read by the fire:

Nothing yet in thee is seen,
But when a genial heat warms thee within,
A new-born wood of various lines there grows:
Here buds an L, and there a B,
Here spouts a V, and there a T,
And all the flourishing letters stand in rows.

COWLEY.

As they sought only for novelty, they did not much enquire whether their allusions were to things high or low, elegant or gross; whether they compared the little to the great, or the great to the little.

Physick and Chirurgery for a Lover.

Gently, ah gently, madam, touch
The wound, which you yourself have made;
That pain must needs be very much,
Which makes me of your hand afraid,
Cordials of pity give me now,
For I too weak for purgings grow.

COWLEY.

The World and a Clock.

Mahol, th' inferior world's fantastic face,
Thro' all the turns of matter's maze did trace;
Great Nature's well-set clock in pieces took;
On all the springs and smallest wheels did look
Of life and motion, and with equal art
Made up the whole again of every part.

COWLEY.

A coal-pit has not often found its poet; but, that it may not want its due honour, Cleiveland has paralleled it with the Sun:

The moderate value of our guiltless ore
Makes no man atheist, and no woman whore;
Yet why should hallow'd vestal's sacred shrine
Deserve more honour than a flaming mine?
These pregnant wombs of heat would fitter be,
Than a few embers, for a deity.
Had he our pits, the Persian would admire
No sun, but warm 's devotion at our fire:
He 'd leave the trotting whipster, and prefer
Our profound Vulcan 'bove that waggoner.
For wants he heat, or light? or would have store
Of both? 'tis here: and what can suns give more?
Nay, what 's the sun, but in a different name,
A coal-pit rampant, or a mine on flame!
Then let this truth reciprocally run,
The sun 's heaven's coalery, and coals our sun.

Death, a Voyage:

No family
E'er rigged a soul for Heaven's discovery,
With whom more venturers might boldly dare
Venture their stakes, with him in joy to share.

DONNE.

THEIR thoughts and expressions were sometimes grossly absurd, and such as no figures or licence can reconcile to the understanding.

A Lover neither dead nor alive:

Then down I laid my head,
Down on cold earth; and for a while was dead,
And my freed soul to a strange somewhere fled;

Ah, sottish soul, said I,
When back to its cage again I saw it fly:
Fool to resume her broken chain,
And row her galley here again!
Fool, to that body to return
Where it condemn'd and destin'd is to burn!
Once dead, how can it be,
Death should a thing so pleasant seem to thee,
That thou should'st come to live it o'er again in me?

COWLEY.

A Lover's heart, a hand grenado:

Wo to her stubborn heart, if once mine come
Into the self-same room;
'Twill tear and blow up all within,
Like a grenado shot into a magazin.
Then shall Love keep the ashes, and torn parts,
Of both our broken hearts:
Shall out of both one new one make:
From her's th' allay, from mine the metal take.

COWLEY.

The poetical propagation of Light:

The prince's favour is diffus'd o'er all,
From which all fortunes, names, and natures fall:
Then from those wombs of stars, the bride's bright eyes,
At every glance a constellation flies,
And sowes the court with stars, and doth prevent,
In light and power, the all-ey'd firmament:
First her eye kindles other ladies' eyes,
Then from their beams their jewels' lustres rise:
And from their jewels torches do take fire,
And all is warmth, and light, and good desire.

DONNE.

THEY were in very little care to clothe their notions with elegance of dress, and therefore miss the notice and the praise which are often gained by those who think less, but are more diligent to adorn their thoughts.

That a Mistress beloved is fairer in idea than in reality, is by Cowley thus expressed:

> Thou in my fancy dost much higher stand,
> Than woman can be plac'd by Nature's hand;
> And I must needs, I 'm sure, a loser be,
> To change thee, as thou 'rt there, for very thee.

That prayer and labour should co-operate, are thus taught by Donne:

> In none but us, are such mix'd engines found,
> As hands of double office: for the ground
> We till with them; and them to heaven we raise:
> Who prayerless labours, or, without this, prays,
> Doth but one half, that's none.

By the same author, a common topick, the danger of procrastination, is thus illustrated:

> ——— That which I should have begun
> In my youth's morning, now late must be done;
> And I, as giddy travellers must do,
> Which stray or sleep all day, and having lost
> Light and strength, dark and tir'd must then ride post.

All that man has to do is to live and die; the sum of humanity is comprehended by Donne in the following lines:

> Think in how poor a prison thou didst lie;
> After, enabled but to suck and cry.

Think, when 'twas grown to most, 'twas a poor inn,
A province pack'd up in two yards of skin,
And that usurp'd, or threaten'd with a rage
Of sicknesses, or their true mother, age.
But think that death hath now enfranchis'd thee;
Thou hast thy expansion now, and liberty;
Think, that a rusty piece discharg'd is flown
In pieces, and the bullet is his own,
And freely flies: this to thy soul allow,
Think thy shell broke, think thy soul hatch'd but now.

THEY were sometimes indelicate and disgusting. Cowley thus apostrophises beauty:

——Thou tyrant, which leav'st no man free!
Thou subtle thief, from whom nought safe can be!
Thou murderer, which hast kill'd; and devil, which
would'st damn me!

Thus he addresses his Mistress:

Thou who, in many a propriety,
So truly art the sun to me,
Add one more likeness, which I 'm sure you can,
And let me and my sun beget a man.

Thus he represents the meditations of a Lover:

Though in thy thoughts scarce any tracts have been
So much as of original sin,
Such charms thy beauty wears, as might
Desires in dying confest saints excite.
Thou with strange adultery
Dost in each breast a brothel keep;
Awake, all men do lust for thee,
And some enjoy thee when they sleep.

The true taste of Tears.

Hither with crystal vials, lovers, come,
And take my tears, which are love's wine,
And try your mistress' tears at home;
For all are false, that taste not just like mine.

DONNE.

This is yet more indelicate:

As the sweet sweat of roses in a still,
As that which from chaf'd musk-cat's pores doth trill,
As the almighty balm of th' early East;
Such are the sweet drops of my mistress' breast.
And on her neck her skin such lustre sets,
They seem no sweat drops, but pearl coronets:
Rank, sweaty froth thy mistress' brow defiles.

DONNE.

THEIR expressions sometimes raise horror, when they intend perhaps to be pathetick:

As men in hell are from diseases free,
So from all other ills am I,
Free from their known formality:
But all pains eminently lie in thee.

COWLEY.

They were not always strictly curious, whether the opinions from which they drew their illustrations were true; it was enough that they were popular. Bacon remarks, that some falsehoods are continued by tradition, because they supply commodious allusions.

It gave a piteous groan, and so it broke:
In vain it something would have spoke;

The love within too strong for 't was,
Like poison put into a Venice-glass.

COWLEY.

IN forming descriptions, they looked out, not for images, but for conceits. Night has been a common subject, which poets have contended to adorn. Dryden's Night is well known; Donne's is as follows:

Thou seest me here at midnight, now all rest:
Time's dead low-water; when all minds divest
To-morrow's business; when the labourers have
Such rest in bed, that their last church-yard grave,
Subject to change, will scarce be a type of this;
Now when the client, whose last hearing is
To-morrow, sleeps; when the condemned man,
Who, when he opes his eyes, must shut them then
Again by death, although sad watch he keep,
Doth practise dying by a little sleep;
Thou at this midnight seest me.

IT must be however confessed of these writers, that if they are upon common subjects often unnecessarily and unpoetically subtle; yet, where scholastick speculation can be properly admitted, their copiousness and acuteness may justly be admired. What Cowley has written upon Hope shews an unequalled fertility of invention:

Hope, whose weak being ruin'd is,
Alike if it succeed and if it miss;
Whom good or ill does equally confound,
And both the horns of Fate's dilemma wound;
Vain shadow! which dost vanish quite,
Both at full noon and perfect night!

The stars have not a possibility
Of blessing thee;
If things then from their end we happy call,
'Tis Hope is the most hopeless thing of all.
Hope, thou bold taster of delight,
Who, whilst thou should'st but taste, devour'st it quite!
Thou bring'st us an estate, yet leav'st us poor,
By clogging it with legacies before!
The joys which we entire should wed,
Come deflower'd virgins to our bed;
Good fortunes without gain imported be,
Such mighty custom 's paid to thee:
For joy, like wine, kept close, does better taste;
If it take air before, its spirits waste.

To the following comparison of a man that travels and his wife that stays at home, with a pair of compasses, it may be doubted whether absurdity or ingenuity has better claim:

Our two souls, therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.
If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fix'd foot, makes no show
To move, but doth if th' other do.
And though it in the centre sit,
Yet, when the other far doth roam,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.
Such wilt thou be to me, who must
Like th' other foot obliquely run.
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end where I begun.

DONNE.

In all these examples it is apparent, that whatever is improper or vitious is produced by a voluntary deviation from nature in pursuit of something new and strange; and that the writers fail to give delight by their desire of exciting admiration.

HAVING thus endeavoured to exhibit a general representation of the style and sentiments of the metaphysical poets, it is now proper to examine particularly the works of Cowley, who was almost the last of that race, and undoubtedly the best.

His Miscellanies contain a collection of short compositions, written some as they were dictated by a mind at leisure, and some as they were called forth by different occasions; with great variety of style and sentiment, from burlesque levity to awful grandeur. Such an assemblage of diversified excellence no other poet has hitherto afforded. To choose the best, among many good, is one of the most hazardous attempts of criticism. I know not whether Scaliger himself has persuaded many readers to join with him in his preference of the two favourite odes, which he estimates in his raptures at the value of a kingdom. I will, however, venture to recommend Cowley's first piece, which ought to be inscribed *To my Muse*, for want of which the second couplet is without reference. When the title is added, there will still remain a defect; for every piece ought to contain in itself whatever is necessary to make it intelligible. Pope has some epitaphs without names; which are therefore epitaphs to be lett, occupied indeed for the present, but hardly appropriated.

The ode on Wit is almost without a rival. It was about the time of Cowley, that *Wit*, which had been till then used for *Intellection*, in contradistinction to *Will*, took the meaning, whatever it be, which it now bears.

Of all the passages in which poets have exemplified their own precepts, none will easily be found of greater excellence than that in which Cowley condemns exuberance of wit:

> Yet 'tis not to adorn and gild each part,
> That shews more cost than art.
> Jewels at nose and lips but ill appear;
> Rather than all things wit, let none be there.
> Several lights will not be seen,
> If there be nothing else between.
> Men doubt, because they stand so thick i' th' sky,
> If those be stars which paint the galaxy.

In his verses to Lord Falkland, whom every man of his time was proud to praise, there are, as there must be in all Cowley's compositions, some striking thoughts, but they are not well wrought. His Elegy on Sir Henry Wotton is vigorous and happy; the series of thoughts is easy and natural; and the conclusion, though a little weakened by the intrusion of Alexander, is elegant and forcible.

It may be remarked, that in this Elegy, and in most of his encomiastic poems, he has forgotten or neglected to name his heroes.

In his poem on the death of Hervey, there is much praise, but little passion; a very just and ample delineation of such virtues as a studious privacy admits, and such intellectual excellence as a mind not yet called forth to action can display. He knew

how to distinguish, and how to commend, the qualities of his companion; but, when he wishes to make us weep, he forgets to weep himself, and diverts his sorrow by imagining how his crown of bays, if he had it, would *crackle* in the *fire*. It is the odd fate of this thought to be the worse for being true. The bay-leaf crackles remarkably as it burns; as therefore this property was not assigned it by chance, the mind must be thought sufficiently at ease that could attend to such minuteness of physiology. But the power of Cowley is not so much to move the affections, as to exercise the understanding.

The *Chronicle* is a composition unrivalled and alone: such gaiety of fancy, such facility of expression, such varied similitude, such a succession of images, and such a dance of words, it is in vain to expect except from Cowley. His strength always appears in his agility; his volatility is not the flutter of a light, but the bound of an elastick mind. His levity never leaves his learning behind it; the moralist, the politician, and the critick, mingle their influence even in this airy frolick of genius. To such a performance Suckling could have brought the gaiety, but not the knowledge; Dryden could have supplied the knowledge, but not the gaiety.

The verses to Davenant, which are vigorously begun, and happily concluded, contain some hints of criticism very justly conceived and happily expressed. Cowley's critical abilities have not been sufficiently observed: the few decisions and remarks, which his prefaces and his notes on the Davideis supply, were at that time accessions to English literature, and shew such skill as raises our wish for more examples.

The lines from Jersey are a very curious and pleasing specimen of the familiar descending to the burlesque.

His two metrical disquisitions *for* and *against* Reason are no mean specimens of metaphysical poetry. The stanzas against knowledge produce little conviction. In those which are intended to exalt the human faculties, Reason has its proper task assigned it; that of judging, not of things revealed, but of the reality of revelation. In the verses *for* Reason is a passage which Bentley, in the only English verses which he is known to have written, seems to have copied, though with the inferiority of an imitator.

> The Holy Book like the eighth sphere doth shine
> With thousand lights of truth divine,
> So numberless the stars, that to our eye
> It makes all but one galaxy.
> Yet Reason must assist too; for, in seas
> So vast and dangerous as these,
> Our course by stars above we cannot know
> Without the compass too below.

After this says Bentley*:

> Who travels in religious jars,
> Truth mix'd with error, shade with rays,
> Like Whiston wanting pyx or stars,
> In ocean wide or sinks or strays.

Cowley seems to have had what Milton is believed to have wanted, the skill to rate his own performances by their just value, and has therefore

* Dodsley's Collection of Poems, Vol. V. R.

closed his Miscellanies with the verses upon Crashaw, which apparently excel all that have gone before them, and in which there are beauties which common authors may justly think not only above their attainment, but above their ambition.

To the Miscellanies succeed the *Anacreontiques*, or paraphrastical translations of some little poems, which pass, however justly, under the name of Anacreon. Of these songs dedicated to festivity and gaiety, in which even the morality is voluptuous, and which teach nothing but the enjoyment of the present day, he has given rather a pleasing than a faithful representation, having retained their spriteliness, but lost their simplicity. The Anacreon of Cowley, like the Homer of Pope, has admitted the decoration of some modern graces, by which he is undoubtedly more amiable to common readers, and perhaps, if they would honestly declare their own perceptions, to far the greater part of those whom courtesy and ignorance are content to style the Learned.

These little pieces will be found more finished in their kind than any other of Cowley's works. The diction shews nothing of the mould of time, and the sentiments are at no great distance from our present habitudes of thought. Real mirth must be always natural, and nature is uniform. Men have been wise in very different modes; but they have always laughed the same way.

Levity of thought naturally produced familiarity of language, and the familiar part of language continues long the same; the dialogue of comedy, when it is transcribed from popular manners and real life,

is read from age to age with equal pleasure. The artifices of inversion, by which the established order of words is changed, or of innovation, by which new words or meanings of words are introduced, is practised, not by those who talk to be understood, but by those who write to be admired.

The Anacreontiques therefore of Cowley give now all the pleasure which they ever gave. If he was formed by nature for one kind of writing more than for another, his power seems to have been greatest in the familiar and the festive.

The next class of his poems is called *The Mistress*, of which it is not necessary to select any particular pieces for praise or censure. They have all the same beauties and faults, and nearly in the same proportion. They are written with exuberance of wit, and with copiousness of learning; and it is truly asserted by Sprat, that the plenitude of the writer's knowledge flows in upon his page, so that the reader is commonly surprised into some improvement. But, considered as the verses of a lover, no man that has ever loved will much commend them. They are neither courtly nor pathetick, have neither gallantry nor fondness. His praises are too far sought, and too hyperbolical, either to express love, or to excite it; every stanza is crowded with darts and flames, with wounds and death, with mingled souls and with broken hearts.

The principal artifice by which *The Mistress* is filled with conceits is very copiously displayed by Addison. Love is by Cowley, as by other poets, expressed metaphorically by flame and fire; and that which is true of real fire is said of love, or figurative fire, the same word in the same sentence retaining

both significations. Thus, " observing the cold regard of his Mistress's eyes, and at the same time their power of producing love in him, he considers them as burning-glasses made of ice. Finding himself able to live in the greatest extremities of love, he concludes the torrid zone to be habitable. Upon the dying of a tree on which he had cut his loves, he observes that his flames had burnt up and withered the tree."

These conceits Addison calls mixed wit; that is, wit which consists of thoughts true in one sense of the expression, and false in the other. Addison's representation is sufficiently indulgent: that confusion of images may entertain for a moment; but, being unnatural, it soon grows wearisome. Cowley delighted in it, as much as if he had invented it; but, not to mention the antients, he might have found it full-blown in modern Italy. Thus Sannazaro:

Aspice quam variis distringar Lesbia curis!
Uror, et heu! nostro manat ab igne liquor:
Sum Nilus, sumque Ætna simul; restringite flammas
O lacrimæ, aut lacrimas ebibe flamma meas.

One of the severe theologians of that time censured him as having published *a book of profane and lascivious verses.* From the charge of profaneness, the constant tenour of his life, which seems to have been eminently virtuous, and the general tendency of his opinions, which discover no irreverence of religion, must defend him; but that the accusation of lasciviousness is unjust, the perusal of his work will sufficiently evince.

Cowley's *Mistress* has no power of seduction: she " plays round the head, but reaches not the heart."

Her beauty and absence, her kindness and cruelty, her disdain and inconstancy, produce no correspondence of emotion. His poetical account of the virtues of plants, and colours of flowers, is not perused with more sluggish frigidity. The compositions are such as might have been written for penance by a hermit, or for hire by a philosophical rhymer who had only heard of another sex; for they turn the mind only on the writer, whom, without thinking on a woman but as the subject for his task, we sometimes esteem as learned, and sometimes despise as trifling, always admire as ingenious, and always condemn as unnatural.

The Pindarique Odes are now to be considered; a species of composition, which Cowley thinks Pancirolus might have counted in *his list of the lost inventions of antiquity*, and which he has made a bold and vigorous attempt to recover.

The purpose with which he has paraphrased an Olympick and Nemæan Ode is by himself sufficiently explained. His endeavour was, not to shew *precisely what Pindar spoke, but his manner of speaking*. He was therefore not at all restrained to his expressions, nor much to his sentiments; nothing was required of him, but not to write as Pindar would not have written.

Of the Olympick Ode, the beginning is, I think, above the original in elegance, and the conclusion below it in strength. The connection is supplied with great perspicuity; and the thoughts, which to a reader of less skill seem thrown together by chance, are concatenated without any abruption. Though

the English ode cannot be called a translation, it may be very properly consulted as a commentary.

The spirit of Pindar is indeed not every where equally preserved. The following pretty lines are not such as his *deep mouth* was used to pour:

> Great Rhea's son,
> If in Olympus top, where thou
> Sitt'st to behold thy sacred show,
> If in Alpheus's silver flight,
> If in my verse thou take delight,
> My verse, great Rhea's son, which is
> Lofty as that, and smooth as this.

In the Nemæan ode the reader must, in mere justice to Pindar, observe, that whatever is said of *the original new moon, her tender forehead and her horns,* is superadded by his paraphrast, who has many other plays of words and fancy unsuitable to the original, as

> The table, free for ev'ry guest,
> No doubt will thee admit,
> And feast more upon thee, than thou on it.

He sometimes extends his author's thoughts without improving them. In the Olympionick an oath is mentioned in a single word, and Cowley spends three lines in swearing by the *Castalian Stream.* We are told of Theron's bounty, with a hint that he had enemies, which Cowley thus enlarges in rhyming prose:

> But in this thankless world the giver
> Is envied even by the receiver;

'Tis now the cheap and frugal fashion
Rather to hide than own the obligation:
Nay, 'tis much worse than so;
It now an artifice does grow
Wrongs and injuries to do,
Lest men should think we owe.

It is hard to conceive that a man of the first rank in learning and wit, when he was dealing out such minute morality in such feeble diction, could imagine, either waking or dreaming, that he imitated Pindar.

In the following odes, where Cowley chooses his own subjects, he sometimes rises to dignity truly Pindarick; and, if some deficiencies of language be forgiven, his strains are such as those of the Theban Bard were to his contemporaries:

Begin the song, and strike the living lyre:
Lo how the years to come, a numerous and well-fitted quire,
All hand in hand do decently advance,
And to my song with smooth and equal measure dance;
While the dance lasts, how long soe'er it be,
My musick's voice shall bear it company;
Till all gentle notes be drown'd
In the last trumpet's dreadful sound.

After such enthusiasm, who will not lament to find the poet conclude with lines like these:

But stop, my Muse—
Hold thy Pindarick Pegasus closely in,
Which does to rage begin—
—'Tis an unruly and a hard-mouth'd horse—

'Twill no unskilful touch endure,
But flings writer and reader too that sits not sure.

The fault of Cowley, and perhaps of all the writers of the metaphysical race, is that of pursuing his thoughts to the last ramifications, by which he loses the grandeur of generality; for of the greatest things the parts are little; what is little can be but pretty, and by claiming dignity becomes ridiculous. Thus all the power of description is destroyed by a scrupulous enumeration, and the force of metaphors is lost, when the mind by the mention of particulars is turned more upon the original than the secondary sense, more upon that from which the illustration is drawn than that to which it is applied.

Of this we have a very eminent example in the ode intituled *The Muse*, who goes to *take the air* in an intellectual chariot, to which he harnesses Fancy and Judgment, Wit and Eloquence, Memory and Invention: how he distinguished Wit from Fancy, or how Memory could properly contribute to Motion, he has not explained: we are however content to suppose that he could have justified his own fiction, and wish to see the Muse begin her career; but there is yet more to be done.

Let the *postillion* Nature mount, and let
The *coachman* Art be set;
And let the airy *footmen*, running all beside,
Make a long row of goodly pride;
Figures, conceits, raptures, and sentences,
In a well-worded dress,
And innocent loves, and pleasant truths, and useful lies,
In all their gaudy *liveries*.

Every mind is now disgusted with this cumber of magnificence; yet I cannot refuse myself the four next lines:

Mount, glorious queen, thy travelling throne,
And bid it to put on;
For long though cheerful is the way,
And life, alas! allows but one ill winter's day.

In the same ode, celebrating the power of the Muse, he gives her prescience, or, in poetical language, the foresight of events hatching in futurity; but, having once an egg in his mind, he cannot forbear to show us that he knows what an egg contains:

Thou into the close nests of Time dost peep,
And there with piercing eye
Through the firm shell and the thick white dost spy
Years to come a-forming lie,
Close in their sacred fecundine asleep.

The same thought is more generally, and therefore more poetically expressed by Casimir, a writer who has many of the beauties and faults of Cowley:

Omnibus mundi Dominator horis
Aptat urgendas per mane pennas,
Pars adhuc nido latet, et futuros
Crescit in annos.

Cowley, whatever was his subject, seems to have been carried, by a kind of destiny, to the light and the familiar, or to conceits which require still more ignoble epithets. A slaughter in the Red Sea *new-dies the water's name;* and England, during the Civil War, was *Albion no more, nor to be named from white.* It is surely by some fascination not easily

surmounted, that a writer professing to revive *the noblest and highest writing in verse*, makes this address to the new year:

Nay, if thou lov'st me, gentle year,
Let not so much as love be there,
Vain, fruitless love I mean; for, gentle year,
Although I fear
There 's of this caution little need,
Yet, gentle year, take heed
How thou dost make
Such a mistake;
Such love I mean alone
As by thy cruel predecessors has been shewn:
For, though I have too much cause to doubt it,
I fain would try, for once, if life can live without it.

The reader of this will be inclined to cry out with Prior—

Ye Criticks, say,
How poor to this was Pindar's style!

Even those who cannot perhaps find in the Isthmian or Nemæan songs what Antiquity has disposed them to expect, will at least see that they are ill-represented by such puny poetry; and all will determine that if this be the old Theban strain, it is not worthy of revival.

To the disproportion and incongruity of Cowley's sentiments must be added the uncertainty and looseness of his measures. He takes the liberty of using in any place a verse of any length, from two syllables to twelve. The verses of Pindar have, as he observes, very little harmony to a modern ear; yet by examining the syllables we perceive them to be regular, and

have reason enough for supposing that the antient audiences were delighted with the sound. The imitator ought therefore to have adopted what he found, and to have added what was wanting; to have preserved a constant return of the same numbers, and to have supplied smoothness of transition and continuity of thought.

It is urged by Dr. Sprat, that the *irregularity of numbers is the very thing* which makes *that kind of poesy fit for all manner of subjects.* But he should have remembered, that what is fit for every thing can fit nothing well. The great pleasure of verse arises from the known measure of the lines, and uniform structure of the stanzas, by which the voice is regulated, and the memory relieved.

If the Pindarick style be, what Cowley thinks it, *the highest and noblest kind of writing in verse,* it can be adapted only to high and noble subjects; and it will not be easy to reconcile the poet with the critick, or to conceive how that can be the highest kind of writing in verse, which, according to Sprat, is *chiefly to be preferred for its near affinity to prose.*

This lax and lawless versification so much concealed the deficiencies of the barren, and flattered the laziness of the idle, that it immediately overspread our books of poetry; all the boys and girls caught the pleasing fashion, and they that could do nothing else could write like Pindar. The rights of antiquity were invaded, and disorder tried to break into the Latin: a poem* on the Sheldonian Theatre, in which all kinds of verse are shaken together, is un-

* First published in quarto, 1669, under the title of "Carmen Pindaricum in Theatrum Sheldonianum in solennibus mag-

happily inserted in the *Musæ Anglicanæ*. Pindarism prevailed about half a century; but at last died gradually away, and other imitations supply its place.

The Pindarick Odes have so long enjoyed the highest degree of poetical reputation, that I am not willing to dismiss them with unabated censure; and surely, though the mode of their composition be erroneous, yet many parts deserve at least that admiration which is due to great comprehension of knowledge, and great fertility of fancy. The thoughts are often new, and often striking; but the greatness of one part is disgraced by the littleness of another; and total negligence of language gives the noblest conceptions the appearance of a fabrick august in the plan, but mean in the materials. Yet surely those verses are not without a just claim to praise; of which it may be said with truth, that no man but Cowley could have written them.

The ~~Davideis~~ now remains to be considered; a poem which the author designed to have extended to twelve books, merely, as he makes no scruple of declaring, because the Æneid had that number; but he had leisure or perseverance only to write the third part. Epick poems have been left unfinished by Virgil, Statius, Spenser, and Cowley. That we have not the whole Davideis is, however, not much to be regretted; for in this undertaking Cowley is, tacitly at least, confessed to have miscarried. There are not many examples of so great a work, produced by an author generally read, and generally praised, that has crept through a century with so little regard.

nifici Operis Encæniis. Recitatum Julii die 9, Anno 1669, à Corbetto Owen, A. B. Æd. Chr. Alumno, Authore." R.

Whatever is said of Cowley, is meant of his other works. Of the Davideis no mention is made; it never appears in books, nor emerges in conversation. By the Spectator it has been once quoted; by Rymer it has once been praised; and by Dryden, in "Mac Flecknoe," it has once been imitated; nor do I recollect much other notice from its publication till now in the whole succession of English literature.

Of this silence and neglect, if the reason be inquired, it will be found partly in the choice of the subject, and partly in the performance of the work.

Sacred History has been always read with submissive reverence, and an imagination overawed and controlled. We have been accustomed to acquiesce in the nakedness and simplicity of the authentic narrative, and to repose on its veracity with such humble confidence as suppresses curiosity. We go with the Historian as he goes, and stop with him when he stops. All amplification is frivolous and vain; all addition to that which is already sufficient for the purposes of Religion seems not only useless, but in some degree profane.

Such events as were produced by the visible interposition of Divine Power are above the power of human genius to dignify. The miracle of Creation, however it may teem with images, is best described with little diffusion of language: *He spake the word, and they were made.*

We are told that Saul *was troubled with an evil spirit*; from this Cowley takes an opportunity of describing Hell, and telling the history of Lucifer, who was, he says,

Once general of a gilded host of sprites,
Like Hesper leading forth the spangled nights;
But down, like light'ning which him struck, he came,
And roar'd at his first plunge into the flame.

Lucifer makes a speech to the inferior agents of mischief, in which there is something of Heathenism, and therefore of impropriety; and, to give efficacy to his words, concludes by lashing *his breast with his long tail.* Envy, after a pause, steps out, and among other declarations of her zeal utters these lines:

Do thou but threat, loud storms shall make reply,
And thunder echo to the trembling sky:
Whilst raging seas swell to so bold an height,
As shall the fire's proud element affright.
Th' old drudging Sun, from his long-beaten way,
Shall at thy voice start, and misguide the day.
The jocund orbs shall break their measur'd pace,
And stubborn poles change their allotted place,
Heaven's gilded troops shall flutter here and there,
Leaving their boasting songs tun'd to a sphere.

Every reader feels himself weary with this useless talk of an allegorical Being.

It is not only when the events are confessedly miraculous, that fancy and fiction lose their effect: the whole system of life, while the Theocracy was yet visible, has an appearance so different from all other scenes of human action, that the reader of the Sacred Volume habitually considers it as the peculiar mode of existence of a distinct species of mankind, that lived and acted with manners uncommunicable; so that it is difficult even for imagination to place us in the state of them whose story is related, and by con-

sequence their joys and griefs are not easily adopted, nor can the attention be often interested in any thing that befalls them.

To the subject thus originally indisposed to the reception of poetical embellishments, the writer brought little that could reconcile impatience, or attract curiosity. Nothing can be more disgusting than a narrative spangled with conceits; and conceits are all that the Davideis supplies.

One of the great sources of poetical delight is description*, or the power of presenting pictures to the mind. Cowley gives inferences instead of images, and shews not what may be supposed to have been seen, but what thoughts the sight might have suggested. When Virgil describes the stone which Turnus lifted against Æneas, he fixes the attention on its bulk and weight:

Saxum circumspicit ingens,
Saxum antiquum, ingens, campo quod forte jacebat
Limes agro positus, litem ut discerneret arvis.

Cowley says of the stone with which Cain slew his brother,

I saw him fling the stone, as if he meant
At once his murther and his monument.

Of the sword taken from Goliah, he says,

A sword so great, that it was only fit,
To cut off his great head that came with it.

Other poets describe Death by some of its common appearances. Cowley says, with a learned allusion to sepulchral lamps real or fabulous,

* Dr. Warton discovers some contrariety of opinion between this and what is said of description, in p. 49. C.

'Twixt his right ribs deep pierc'd the furious blade,
And opened wide those secret vessels where
Life's light goes out, when first they let in air.

But he has allusions vulgar as well as learned. In a visionary succession of kings:

Joas at first does bright and glorious shew,
In life's fresh morn his fame does early crow.

Describing an undisciplined army, after having said with elegance,

His forces seem'd no army, but a crowd
Heartless, unarm'd, disorderly and loud,

he gives them a fit of the ague.

The allusions, however, are not always to vulgar things; he offends by exaggeration as much as by diminution:

The king was plac'd alone, and o'er his head
A well-wrought heaven of silk and gold was spread.

Whatever he writes is always polluted with some conceit:

Where the sun's fruitful beams give metals birth,
Where he the growth of fatal gold doth see,
Gold, which alone more influence has than he.

In one passage he starts a sudden question, to the confusion of Philosophy:

Ye learned heads, whom ivy garlands grace,
Why does that twining plant the oak embrace;
The oak, for courtship most of all unfit,
And rough as are the winds that fight with it?

His expressions have sometimes a degree of meanness that surpasses expectation:

Nay, gentle guests, he cries, since now you 're in,
The story of your gallant friend begin.

In a simile descriptive of the Morning:

As glimmering stars just at the approach of day,
Cashier'd by troops, at last drop all away.

The dress of Gabriel deserves attention:

He took for skin a cloud most soft and bright,
That e'er the mid-day sun pierc'd through with light;
Upon his cheeks a lively blush he spread,
Wash'd from the morning beauties' deepest red;
An harmless flatt'ring meteor shone for hair,
And fell adown his shoulders with loose care;
He cuts out a silk mantle from the skies,
Where the most sprightly azure pleas'd the eyes;
This he with starry vapours sprinkles all,
Took in their prime ere they grow ripe and fall;
Of a new rainbow, ere it fret or fade,
The choicest piece cut out, a scarf is made.

This is a just specimen of Cowley's imagery: what might in general expressions be great and forcible, he weakens and makes ridiculous by branching it into small parts. That Gabriel was invested with the softest or brightest colours of the sky, we might have been told, and been dismissed to improve the idea in our different proportions of conception; but Cowley could not let us go till he had related where Gabriel got first his skin, and then his mantle, then his lace, and then his scarf, and related it in the terms of the mercer and tailor.

Sometimes he indulges himself in a digression, always conceived with his natural exuberance, and commonly, even where it is not long, continued till it is tedious.

> I' th' library a few choice authors stood,
> Yet 'twas well stor'd, for that small store was good;
> Writing, man's spiritual physick, was not then
> Itself, as now, grown a disease of men.
> Learning (young virgin) but few suitors knew;
> The common prostitute she lately grew,
> And with the spurious brood loads now the press;
> Laborious effects of idleness.

As the Davideis affords only four books, though intended to consist of twelve, there is no opportunity for such criticism as Epick poems commonly supply. The plan of the whole work is very imperfectly shewn by the third part. The duration of an unfinished action cannot be known. Of characters, either not yet introduced, or shewn but upon few occasions, the full extent and the nice discriminations cannot be ascertained. The fable is plainly implex, formed rather from the Odyssey than the Iliad: and many artifices of diversification are employed, with the skill of a man acquainted with the best models. The past is recalled by narration, and the future anticipated by vision: but he has been so lavish of his poetical art, that it is difficult to imagine how he could fill eight books more without practising again the same modes of disposing his matter; and perhaps the perception of this growing incumbrance inclined him to stop. By this abruption posterity lost more instruction than delight. If the continuation

of the Davideis can be missed, it is for the learning that had been diffused over it, and the notes in which it had been explained.

Had not his characters been depraved like every other part by improper decorations, they would have deserved uncommon praise. He gives Saul both the body and mind of a hero:

> His way once chose, he forward thrust outright,
> Nor turn'd aside for danger or delight.

And the different beauties of the lofty Merah and the gentle Michol are very justly conceived and strongly painted.

Rymer has declared the Davideis superior to the Jerusalem of Tasso, "which," says he, "the poet, with all his care, has not totally purged from pedantry." If by pedantry is meant that minute knowledge which is derived from particular sciences and studies, in opposition to the general notions supplied by a wide survey of life and nature, Cowley certainly errs, by introducing pedantry far more frequently than Tasso. I know not, indeed, why they should be compared; for the resemblance of Cowley's work to Tasso's is only that they both exhibit the agency of celestial and infernal spirits, in which however they differ widely; for Cowley supposes them commonly to operate upon the mind by suggestion; Tasso represents them as promoting or obstructing events by external agency.

Of particular passages that can be properly compared, I remember only the description of Heaven, in which the different manner of the two writers is sufficiently discernible. Cowley's is scarcely descrip-

tion, unless it be possible to describe by negatives; for he tells us only what there is not in Heaven. Tasso endeavours to represent the splendours and pleasures of the regions of happiness. Tasso affords images, and Cowley sentiments. It happens, however, that Tasso's description affords some reason for Rymer's censure. He says of the Supreme Being,

> Hà sotto i piedi e fato e la natura
> Ministri humili, e 'l moto, e ch'il misura.

The second line has in it more of pedantry than perhaps can be found in any other stanza of the poem.

In the perusal of the Davideis, as of all Cowley's works, we find wit and learning unprofitably squandered. Attention has no relief; the affections are never moved: we are sometimes surprized, but never delighted; and find much to admire, but little to approve. Still however it is the work of Cowley, of a mind capacious by nature, and replenished by study.

In the general review of Cowley's poetry it will be found, that he wrote with abundant fertility, but negligent or unskilful selection; with much thought but with little imagery; that he is never pathetick, and rarely sublime; but always either ingenious or learned, either acute or profound.

It is said by Denham in his elegy,

> To him no author was unknown,
> Yet what he writ was all his own.

This wide position requires less limitation, when it is affirmed of Cowley, than perhaps of any other poet. —He read much, and yet borrowed little.

His character of writing was indeed not his own: he unhappily adopted that which was predominant. He saw a certain way to present praise; and, not sufficiently enquiring by what means the antients have continued to delight through all the changes of human manners, he contented himself with a deciduous laurel, of which the verdure in its spring was bright and gay, but which time has been continually stealing from his brows.

He was in his own time considered as of unrivalled excellence. Clarendon represents him as having taken a flight beyond all that went before him; and Milton is said to have declared, that the three greatest English poets were Spenser, Shakspeare, and Cowley.

His manner he had in common with others; but his sentiments were his own. Upon every subject he thought for himself; and such was his copiousness of knowledge, that something at once remote and applicable rushed into his mind; yet it is not likely that he always rejected a commodious idea merely because another had used it: his known wealth was so great that he might have borrowed without loss of credit.

In his elegy on Sir Henry Wotton, the last lines have such resemblance to the noble epigram of Grotius on the death of Scaliger, that I cannot but think them copied from it, though they are copied by no servile hand.

One passage in his *Mistress* is so apparently borrowed from Donne, that he probably would not have written it, had it not mingled with his own thoughts,

so as that he did not perceive himself taking it from another:

Although I think thou never found wilt be,
  Yet I 'm resolv'd to search for thee;
  The search itself rewards the pains.
So, though the chymic his great secret miss
(For neither it in Art or Nature is),
  Yet things well worth his toil he gains:
  And does his charge and labour pay
With good unsought experiments by the way.

COWLEY.

Some that have deeper digg'd Love's mine than I,
Say, where his centric happiness doth lie:
  I have lov'd, and got, and told;
But should I love, get, tell, till I were old;
I should not find that hidden mystery;
  Oh, 'tis imposture all!
And as no chymic yet th' elixir got,
  But glorifies his pregnant pot,
  If by the way to him befal
Some odoriferous thing, or medicinal,
  So lovers dream a rich and long delight,
  But get a winter-seeming summer's night.

Jonson and Donne, as Dr. Hurd remarks, were then in the highest esteem.

It is related by Clarendon, that Cowley always acknowledges his obligation to the learning and industry of Jonson: but I have found no traces of Jonson in his works: to emulate Donne appears to have been his purpose; and from Donne he may have learned that familiarity with religious images, and that light allusion to sacred things, by which readers, far short of sanctity, are frequently of-

fended; and which would not be borne in the present age, when devotion, perhaps not more fervent, is more delicate.

Having produced one passage taken by Cowley from Donne, I will recompense him by another which Milton seems to have borrowed from him. He says of Goliah,

His spear, the trunk was of a lofty tree,
Which Nature meant some tall ship's mast should be.

Milton of Satan:

His spear, to equal which the tallest pine
Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the mast
Of some great admiral, were but a wand,
He walked with.

His diction was in his own time censured as negligent. He seems not to have known, or not to have considered, that words being arbitrary must owe their power to association, and have the influence, and that only, which custom has given them. Language is the dress of thought: and as the noblest mien, or most graceful action, would be degraded and obscured by a garb appropriated to the gross employments of rusticks or mechanicks; so the most heroick sentiments will lose their efficacy, and the most splendid ideas drop their magnificence, if they are conveyed by words used commonly upon low and trivial occasions, debased by vulgar mouths, and contaminated by inelegant applications.

Truth indeed is always truth, and reason is always reason; they have an intrinsic and unalterable value, and constitute that intellectual gold which defies destruction; but gold may be so concealed in baser

matter, that only a chymist can recover it; sense may be so hidden in unrefined and plebeian words, that none but philosophers can distinguish it; and both may be so buried in impurities, as not to pay the cost of their extraction.

The diction, being the vehicle of the thoughts, first presents itself to the intellectual eye: and if the first appearance offends, a further knowledge is not often sought. Whatever professes to benefit by pleasing, must please at once. The pleasures of the mind imply something sudden and unexpected; that which elevates must always surprise. What is perceived by slow degrees may gratify us with the consciousness of improvement, but will never strike with the sense of pleasure.

Of all this, Cowley appears to have been without knowledge, or without care. He makes no selection of words, nor seeks any neatness of phrase: he has no elegancies either lucky or elaborate: as his endeavours were rather to impress sentences upon the understanding than images on the fancy, he has few epithets, and those scattered without peculiar propriety or nice adaptation. It seems to follow from the necessity of the subject, rather than the care of the writer, that the diction of his heroic poem is less familiar than that of his slightest writings. He has given not the same numbers, but the same diction, to the gentle Anacreon and the tempestuous Pindar.

His versification seems to have had very little of his care; and if what he thinks be true, that his numbers are unmusical only when they are ill-read, the art of reading them is at present lost; for they

are commonly harsh to modern ears. He has indeed many noble lines, such as the feeble care of Waller never could produce. The bulk of his thoughts sometimes swelled his verse to unexpected and inevitable grandeur; but his excellence of this kind is merely fortuitous: he sinks willingly down to his general carelessness, and avoids with very little care either meanness or asperity.

His contractions are often rugged and harsh:

> One flings a mountain, and its rivers too
> Torn up with 't.

His rhymes are very often made by pronouns, or particles, or the like unimportant words, which disappoint the ear, and destroy the energy of the line.

His combination of different measures is sometimes dissonant and unpleasing; he joins verses together, of which the former does not slide easily into the latter.

The words *do* and *did*, which so much degrade in present estimation the line that admits them, were in the time of Cowley little censured or avoided; how often he used them, and with how bad an effect, at least to our ears, will appear by a passage, in which every reader will lament to see just and noble thoughts defrauded of their praise by inelegance of language:

> Where honour or where conscience *does* not bind,
> No other law shall shackle me;
> Slave to myself I ne'er will be;
> Nor shall my future actions be confin'd
> By my own present mind.

Who by resolves and vows engag'd *does* stand
For days, that yet belong to fate,
Does like an unthrift mortgage his estate,
Before it falls into his hand;
The bondman of the cloister so,
All that he *does* receive *does* always owe.
And still as time comes in, it goes away,
Not to enjoy, but debts to pay!
Unhappy slave, and pupil to a bell!
Which his hour's work as well as hours *does* tell:
Unhappy till the last, the kind releasing knell.

His heroic lines are often formed of monosyllables; but yet they are sometimes sweet and sonorous.

He says of the Messiah,

Round the whole earth his dreaded name shall sound,
And reach to worlds that must not yet be found.

In another place, of David,

Yet bid him go securely, when he sends;
'Tis Saul that is his foe, and we his friends.
The man who has his God, no aid can lack;
And we who bid him go, will bring him back.

Yet amidst his negligence he sometimes attempted an improved and scientific versification; of which it will be best to give his own account subjoined to this line:

Nor can the glory contain itself in th' endless space.

"I am sorry that it is necessary to admonish the most part of readers, that it is not by negligence that this verse is so loose, long, and, as it were,

vast; it is to paint in the number the nature of the thing which it describes, which I would have observed in divers other places of this poem, that else will pass for very careless verses: as before,

And over-runs the neighb'ring fields with violent course.

" In the second book;

Down a precipice deep, down he casts them all.——

" And,

And fell a-down his shoulders with loose care.

" In the third,

Brass was his helmet, his boots brass, and o'er
His breast a thick plate of strong brass he wore.

" In the fourth,

Like some fair pine o'er-looking all th' ignobler wood.

" And,

Some from the rocks cast themselves down headlong.

" And many more: but it is enough to instance in a few. The thing is, that the disposition of words and numbers should be such, as that, out of the order and sound of them, the things themselves may be represented. This the Greeks were not so accurate as to bind themselves to; neither have our English poets observed it, for aught I can find. The Latins *(qui Musas colunt severiores)* sometimes did it; and their prince, Virgil, always: in whom the examples are innumerable, and taken

notice of by all judicious men, so that it is superfluous to collect them."

I know not whether he has, in many of these instances, attained the representation or resemblance that he purposes. Verse can imitate only sound and motion. A *boundless* verse, a *headlong* verse, and a verse of *brass* or of *strong brass*, seem to comprise very incongruous and unsociable ideas. What there is peculiar in the sound of the line expressing *loose care*, I cannot discover; nor why the *pine* is *taller* in an Alexandrine than in ten syllables.

But, not to defraud him of his due praise, he has given one example of representative versification, which perhaps no other English line can equal.

Begin, be bold, and venture to be wise:
He, who defers this work from day to day,
Does on a river's bank expecting stay
Till the whole stream that stopp'd him shall be gone,
Which runs, and, as it runs, for ever shall run on.

Cowley was, I believe, the first poet that mingled Alexandrines at pleasure with the common heroick of ten syllables; and from him Dryden borrowed the practice, whether ornamental or licentious. He considered the verse of twelve syllables as elevated and majestick, and has therefore deviated into that measure when he supposes the voice heard of the Supreme Being.

The author of the Davideis is commended by Dryden for having written it in couplets, because he discovered that any staff was too lyrical for an heroick poem; but this seems to have been known before by May and Sandys, the translators of the Pharsalia and the Metamorphoses.

In the Davideis are some hemistichs, or verses left imperfect by the author, in imitation of Virgil, whom he supposes not to have intended to complete them: that this opinion is erroneous, may be probably concluded, because this truncation is imitated by no subsequent Roman poet; because Virgil himself filled up one broken line in the heat of recitation; because in one the sense is now unfinished; and because all that can be done by a broken verse, a line intersected by a *cæsura*, and a full stop, will equally effect.

Of triplets in his Davideis he makes no use, and perhaps did not at first think them allowable; but he appears afterwards to have changed his mind, for in the verses on the government of Cromwell he inserts them liberally with great happiness.

After so much criticism on his Poems, the Essays which accompany them must not be forgotten. What is said by Sprat of his conversation, that no man could draw from it any suspicion of his excellence in poetry, may be applied to these compositions. No author ever kept his verse and his prose at a greater distance from each other. His thoughts are natural, and his style has a smooth and placid equability, which has never yet obtained its due commendation. Nothing is far sought, or hard-laboured; but all is easy without feebleness, and familiar without grossness.

It has been observed by Felton, in his Essay on the Classicks, that Cowley was beloved by every Muse that he courted; and that he has rivalled the Antients in every kind of poetry but tragedy.

It may be affirmed, without any encomiastick fervour, that he brought to his poetick labours a mind replete with learning, and that his pages are embellished with all the ornaments which books could supply; that he was the first who imparted to English numbers the enthusiasm of the greater ode, and the gaiety of the less; that he was equally qualified for spritely sallies, and for lofty flights; that he was among those who freed translation from servility, and, instead of following his author at a distance, walked by his side; and that if he left versification yet improveable, he left likewise from time to time such specimens of excellence as enabled succeeding poets to improve it.

DENHAM.

Of Sir JOHN DENHAM very little is known but what is related of him by Wood, or by himself.

He was born at Dublin 1615*; the only son of Sir John Denham, of Little Horsley in Essex, then chief baron of the Exchequer in Ireland, and of Eleanor, daughter of Sir Garret More, baron of Mellefont.

Two years afterwards, his father, being made one of the barons of the Exchequer in England, brought him away from his native country, and educated him in London.

In 1631 he was sent to Oxford, where he was considered "as a dreaming young man, given more to

* In Hamilton's Memoirs of Count Grammont, Sir John Denham is said to have been 79 when he married Miss Brook about the year 1664; according to which statement he was born in 1585. But Dr. Johnson, who has followed Wood, is right. He entered Trinity College, Oxford, at the age of 16 in 1631, as appears by the following entry which I copied from the Matriculation Book.

Trin. Coll.

"1631. Nov. 18. Johannes Denham, Essex. filius J. Denham de Horsley Parvâ in com. prædict. militis, annos natus 16."

MALONE.

dice and cards than study:" and therefore gave no prognosticks of his future eminence; nor was suspected to conceal, under sluggishness and laxity, a genius born to improve the literature of his country.

When he was, three years afterwards, removed to Lincoln's Inn, he prosecuted the common law with sufficient appearance of application; yet did not lose his propensity to cards and dice; but was very often plundered by gamesters.

Being severely reproved for this folly, he professed, and perhaps believed, himself reclaimed; and, to testify the sincerity of his repentance, wrote and published "An Essay upon Gaming."

He seems to have divided his studies between law and poetry; for, in 1636, he translated the second book of the Æneid.

Two years after, his father died; and then, notwithstanding his resolutions and professions, he returned again to the vice of gaming, and lost several thousand pounds that had been left him.

In 1641, he published "The Sophy." This seems to have given him his first hold of the publick attention; for Waller remarked, "that he broke out like the Irish rebellion, three-score thousand strong, when nobody was aware, or in the least suspected it;" an observation which could have had no propriety, had his poetical abilities been known before.

He was after that pricked for Sheriff of Surrey, and made governor of Farnham Castle for the king; but he soon resigned that charge, and retreated to Oxford, where, in 1643, he published "Cooper's Hill."

This poem had such reputation as to excite the common artifice by which envy degrades excellence. A report was spread, that the performance was not his own, but that he had bought it of a vicar for forty pounds. The same attempt was made to rob Addison of his Cato, and Pope of his Essay on Criticism.

In 1647, the distresses of the royal family required him to engage in more dangerous employments. He was entrusted by the queen with a message to the king; and, by whatever means, so far softened the ferocity of Hugh Peters, that by his intercession admission was procured. Of the king's condescension he has given an account in the dedication of his works.

He was afterwards employed in carrying on the king's correspondence; and, as he says, discharged this office with great safety to the royalists: and, being accidentally discovered by the adverse party's knowledge of Mr. Cowley's hand, he escaped happily both for himself and his friends.

He was yet engaged in a greater undertaking. In April 1648, he conveyed James the Duke of York from London into France, and delivered him there to the queen and prince of Wales. This year he published his translation of "Cato Major."

He now resided in France, as one of the followers of the exiled king; and, to divert the melancholy of their condition, was sometimes enjoined by his master to write occasional verses; one of which amusements was probably his ode or song upon the Embassy to Poland, by which he and lord Crofts procured a contribution of ten thousand pounds from the Scotch,

that wandered over the kingdom. Poland was at that time very much frequented by itinerant traders, who, in a country of very little commerce and of great extent, where every man resided on his own estate, contributed very much to the accommodation of life, by bringing to every man's house those little necessaries which it was very inconvenient to want, and very troublesome to fetch. I have formerly read, without much reflection, of the multitude of Scotchmen that travelled with their wares in Poland; and that their numbers were not small, the success of this negociation gives sufficient evidence.

About this time, what estate the war and the gamesters had left him was sold, by order of the parliament; and when, in 1652, he returned to England, he was entertained by the Earl of Pembroke.

Of the next years of his life there is no account. At the Restoration he obtained that which many missed, the reward of his loyalty; being made surveyor of the king's buildings, and dignified with the order of the Bath. He seems now to have learned some attention to money; for Wood says, that he got by this place seven thousand pounds.

After the Restoration, he wrote the poem on Prudence and Justice, and perhaps some of his other pieces; and as he appears, whenever any serious question comes before him, to have been a man of piety, he consecrated his poetical powers to religion, and made a metrical version of the Psalms of David. In this attempt he has failed; but in sacred poetry who has succeeded?

It might be hoped that the favour of his master and esteem of the publick would now make him

happy. But human felicity is short and uncertain; a second marriage brought upon him so much disquiet, as for a time disordered his understanding; and Butler lampooned him for his lunacy. I know not whether the malignant lines were then made publick, nor what provocation incited Butler to do that which no provocation can excuse.

His frenzy lasted not long*; and he seems to have regained his full force of mind; for he wrote afterwards his excellent poem upon the death of Cowley, whom he was not long to survive; for on the 19th of March, 1668, he was buried by his side.

DENHAM is deservedly considered as one of the fathers of English poetry. "Denham and Waller," says Prior, "improved our versification, and Dryden perfected it." He has given specimens of various compositions, descriptive, ludicrous, didactick, and sublime.

He appears to have had, in common with almost all mankind, the ambition of being upon proper occasions *a merry fellow*, and in common with most of them to have been by nature, or by early habits, debarred from it. Nothing is less exhilarating than the ludicrousness of Denham; he does not fail for want of efforts; he is familiar, he is gross; but he is never merry, unless the "Speech against Peace in the close Committee" be excepted. For grave burlesque, however, his imitation of Davenant shews him to have been well qualified.

* In Grammont's Memoirs many circumstances are related, both of his marriage and his frenzy, very little favourable to his character. R.

Of his more elevated occasional poems there is perhaps none that does not deserve commendation. In the verses to Fletcher, we have an image that has since been often adopted: *

"But whither am I stray'd? I need not raise
Trophies to thee from other men's dispraise;
Nor is thy fame on lesser ruins built,
Nor need thy juster title the foul guilt
Of eastern kings, who, to secure their reign,
Must have their brothers, sons, and kindred, slain."

After Denham, Orrery, in one of his prologues,

"Poets are sultans, if they had their will;
For every author would his brother kill."

And Pope,

"Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
Bear like the Turk no brother near the throne."

But this is not the best of his little pieces: it is excelled by his poem to Fanshaw, and his elegy on Cowley.

His praise of Fanshaw's version of Guarini contains a very spritely and judicious character of a good translator:

"That servile path thou nobly dost decline,
Of tracing word by word and line by line.
Those are the labour'd births of slavish brains,
Not the effect of poetry, but pains;

* It is remarkable that Johnson should not have recollected, that this image is to be found in Bacon. Aristoteles, more Ottomannorum, regnare se haud tuto posse putabat, nisi fratres suos omnes contrucidâsset. De Augment. Scient. lib. 3.

Cheap vulgar arts, whose narrowness affords
No flight for thoughts, but poorly stick at words.
A new and nobler way thou dost pursue,
To make translations and translators too,
They but preserve the ashes; thou the flame,
True to his sense, but truer to his fame."

The excellence of these lines is greater, as the truth which they contain was not at that time generally known.

His poem on the death of Cowley was his last, and, among his shorter works, his best performance: the numbers are musical, and the thoughts are just.

"COOPER'S HILL" is the work that confers upon him the rank and dignity of an original author. He seems to have been, at least among us, the author of a species of composition that may be denominated *local poetry*, of which the fundamental subject is some particular landscape, to be poetically described with the addition of such embellishments as may be supplied by historical retrospection or incidental meditation.

To trace a new scheme of poetry has in itself a very high claim to praise, and its praise is yet more when it is apparently copied by Garth and Pope*; after whose names little will be gained by an enumeration of smaller poets, that have left scarcely a corner of the island not dignified either by rhyme, or blank verse.

"COOPER'S HILL," if it be maliciously inspected,

* By Garth, in his "Poem on Claremont:" and by Pope, in his "Windsor Forest." H.

will not be found without its faults. The digressions are too long, the morality too frequent, and the sentiments sometimes such as will not bear a rigorous enquiry.

The four verses, which, since Dryden has commended them, almost every writer for a century past has imitated, are generally known:

> "O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
> My great example, as it is my theme!
> Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
> Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full."

The lines are in themselves not perfect; for most of the words, thus artfully opposed, are to be understood simply on one side of the comparison, and metaphorically on the other; and if there be any language which does not express intellectual operations by material images, into that language they cannot be translated. But so much meaning is comprized in so few words; the particulars of resemblance are so perspicaciously collected, and every mode of excellence separated from its adjacent fault by so nice a line of limitation; the different parts of the sentence are so accurately adjusted; and the flow of the last couplet is so smooth and sweet; that the passage, however celebrated, has not been praised above its merit. It has beauty peculiar to itself, and must be numbered among those felicities which cannot be produced at will by wit and labour, but must rise unexpectedly in some hour propitious to poetry.

He appears to have been one of the first that understood the necessity of emancipating translation

from the drudgery of counting lines and interpreting single words. How much this servile practice obscured the clearest and deformed the most beautiful parts of the ancient authors, may be discovered by a perusal of our earlier versions; some of them are the works of men well qualified, not only by critical knowledge, but by poetical genius, who yet, by a mistaken ambition of exactness, degraded at once their originals and themselves.

Denham saw the better way, but has not pursued it with great success. His versions of Virgil are not pleasing; but they taught Dryden to please better. His poetical imitation of Tully on "Old Age" has neither the clearness of prose, nor the sprightliness of poetry.

The "strength of Denham," which Pope so emphatically mentions, is to be found in many lines and couplets, which convey much meaning in few words, and exhibit the sentiment with more weight than bulk.

On the Thames.

"Though with those streams he no resemblance hold,
Whose foam is amber, and their gravel gold;
His genuine and less guilty wealth t' explore,
Search not his bottom, but survey his shore."

On Strafford.

"His wisdom such, at once it did appear
Three kingdoms' wonder, and three kingdoms' fear.
While single he stood forth, and seem'd, although
Each had an army, as an equal foe,

Such was his force of eloquence to make
The hearers more concern'd than he that spake:
Each seem'd to act that part he came to see,
And none was more a looker-on than he;
So did he move our passions, some were known
To wish, for the defence, the crime their own.
Now private pity strove with public hate,
Reason with rage, and eloquence with fate."

On Cowley.

"To him no author was unknown,
Yet what he wrote was all his own;
Horace's wit, and Virgil's state,
He did not steal, but emulate!
And, when he would like them appear,
Their garb, but not their cloaths, did wear."

As one of Denham's principal claims to the regard of posterity arises from his improvement of our numbers, his versification ought to be considered. It will afford that pleasure which arises from the observation of a man of judgment naturally right, forsaking bad copies by degrees, and advancing towards a better practice, as he gains more confidence in himself.

In his translation of Virgil, written when he was about twenty-one years old, may be still found the old manner of continuing the sense ungracefully from verse to verse:

"Then all those
Who in the dark our fury did escape,
Returning, know our borrow'd arms, and shape,
And differing dialect; then their numbers swell
And grow upon us; first Chorœbus fell

Before Minerva's altar; next did bleed
Just Ripheus, whom no Trojan did exceed
In virtue, yet the gods his fate decreed.
Then Hypanis and Dymas, wounded by
Their friends; nor thee, Pantheus, thy piety,
Nor consecrated mitre, from the same
Ill fate could save; my country's funeral flame
And Troy's cold ashes I attest, and call
To witness for myself, that in their fall
No foes, no death, nor danger, I declin'd,
Did and deserv'd no less, my fate to find."

From this kind of concatenated metre he afterwards refrained, and taught his followers the art of concluding their sense in couplets; which has perhaps been with rather too much constancy pursued.

This passage exhibits one of those triplets which are not unfrequent in this first essay, but which it is to be supposed his maturer judgment disapproved, since in his latter works he has totally forborn them.

His rhymes are such as seem found without difficulty, by following the sense; and are for the most part as exact at least as those of other poets, though now and then the reader is shifted off with what he can get:

"O how *transform'd!*
How much unlike that Hector, who *return'd*
Clad in Achilles' spoils!"

And again:

"From thence a thousand lesser poets *sprung*
Like petty princes from the fall of *Rome.*"

Sometimes the weight of rhyme is laid upon a word too feeble to sustain it:

" Troy confounded falls
From all her glories: if it might have stood
By any power, by this right hand it *shou'd*."
" —And though my outward state misfortune *hath*
Deprest thus low, it cannot reach my faith."
" —Thus, by his fraud and our own faith o'ercome,
A feigned tear destroys us, against *whom*
Tydides nor Achilles could prevail,
Nor ten years conflict, nor a thousand sail."

He is not very careful to vary the ends of his verses; in one passage the word *die* rhymes three couplets in six.

Most of these petty faults are in his first productions, when he was less skilful, or at least less dextrous in the use of words; and though they had been more frequent, they could only have lessened the grace, not the strength of his composition. He is one of the writers that improved our taste, and advanced our language, and whom we ought therefore to read with gratitude, though, having done much, he left much to do.

MILTON.

THE life of Milton has been already written in so many forms, and with such minute enquiry, that I might perhaps more properly have contented myself with the addition of a few notes on Mr. Fenton's elegant Abridgement, but that a new narrative was thought necessary to the uniformity of this edition.

JOHN MILTON was by birth a gentleman, descended from the proprietors of Milton, near Thame, in Oxfordshire, one of whom forfeited his estate in the times of York and Lancaster. Which side he took I know not; his descendant inherited no veneration for the White Rose.

His grandfather John was keeper of the forest of Shotover, a zealous papist, who disinherited his son, because he had forsaken the religion of his ancestors.

His father, John, who was the son disinherited, had recourse for his support to the profession of a scrivener. He was a man eminent for his skill in musick, many of his compositions being still to be found; and his reputation in his profession was such, that he grew

rich, and retired to an estate. He had probably more than common literature, as his son addresses him in one of his most elaborate Latin poems. He married a gentlewoman of the name of Caston, a Welsh family, by whom he had two sons, John the poet, and Christopher, who studied the law, and adhered, as the law taught him, to the King's party, for which he was a while persecuted, but having, by his brother's interest, obtained permission to live in quiet, he supported himself so honourably by chamber-practice, that, soon after the accession of King James, he was knighted, and made a judge; but, his constitution being too weak for business, he retired before any disreputable compliances became necessary.

He had likewise a daughter Anne, whom he married with a considerable fortune to Edward Philips, who came from Shrewsbury, and rose in the Crown-office to be secondary: by him she had two sons, John and Edward, who were educated by the poet, and from whom is derived the only authentic account of his domestic manners.

John, the poet, was born in his father's house, at the Spread-Eagle in Bread-street, Dec. 9, 1608, between six and seven in the morning. His father appears to have been very solicitous about his education; for he was instructed at first by private tuition under the care of Thomas Young, who was afterwards chaplain to the English merchants at Hamburgh, and of whom we have reason to think well, since his scholar considered him as worthy of an epistolary elegy.

He was then sent to St. Paul's School, under the

care of Mr. Gill; and removed, in the beginning of his sixteenth year, to Christ's College in Cambridge, where he entered a sizar*, Feb. 12, 1624.

He was at this time eminently skilled in the Latin tongue; and he himself, by annexing the dates to his first compositions, a boast of which the learned Politian had given him an example, seems to commend the earliness of his own proficiency to the notice of posterity. But the products of his vernal fertility have been surpassed by many, and particularly by his contemporary Cowley. Of the powers of the mind it is difficult to form an estimate: many have excelled Milton in their first essays, who never rose to works like "Paradise Lost."

At fifteen, a date which he uses till he is sixteen, he translated or versified two Psalms, 114 and 136, which he thought worthy of the publick eye; but they raise no great expectations: they would in any numerous school have obtained praise, but not excited wonder.

Many of his elegies appear to have been written in his eighteenth year, by which it appears that he had then read the Roman authors with very nice discernment. I once heard Mr. Hampton, the translator of Polybius, remark, what I think is true, that

* In this assertion Dr. Johnson was mistaken. Milton was admitted a pensioner, and not a sizar, as will appear by the following extract from the College Register: "Johannes Milton Londinensis, filius Johannis, institutus fuit in literarum elementis sub Mag'ro Gill Gymnasii Paulini præfecto, admissus est *Pensionarius Minor* Feb. 12°, 1624, sub M'ro Chappell, solvitq. pro Ingr. 0*l*. 10*s*. 0*d*." R.

Milton was the first Englishman who, after the revival of Letters, wrote Latin verses with classick elegance. If any exceptions can be made, they are very few: Haddon and Ascham, the pride of Elizabeth's reign, however they have succeeded in prose, no sooner attempt verse than they provoke derision. If we produced any thing worthy of notice before the elegies of Milton, it was perhaps Alabaster's "Roxana."*

Of the exercises which the rules of the University required, some were published by him in his maturer years. They had been undoubtedly applauded; for they were such as few can perform; yet there is reason to suspect that he was regarded in his college with no great fondness. That he obtained no fellowship is certain; but the unkindness with which he was treated was not merely negative. I am ashamed to relate what I fear is true, that Milton was one of the last students in either university that suffered the publick indignity of corporal correction.

It was, in the violence of controversial hostility, objected to him, that he was expelled: this he steadily denies, and it was apparently not true; but it seems plain, from his own verses to Diodati, that he had incurred *Rustication*, a temporary dismission into the country, with perhaps the loss of a term.

Me tenet urbs refluâ quam Thamesis alluit undâ,
Meque nec invitum patria dulcis habet.
Jam nec arundiferum mihi cura revisere Camum,
Nec dudum *vetiti* me *laris* angit amor.—
Nec duri libet usque minas perferre magistri,
Cæteraque ingenio non subeunda meo.

* Published 1632. R.

Si sit hoc *exilium* patrios adiise penates,
Et vacuum curis otia grata sequi,
Non ego vel *profugi* nomen sortemve recuso,
Lætus et *exilii* conditione fruor.

I cannot find any meaning but this, which even kindness and reverence can give to the term *vetiti laris*, "a habitation from which he is excluded;" or how *exile* can be otherwise interpreted. He declares yet more, that he is weary of enduring *the threats of a rigorous master, and something else, which a temper like his cannot undergo.* What was more than threat was probably punishment. This poem, which mentions his *exile*, proves likewise that it was not perpetual: for it concludes with a resolution of returning some time to Cambridge. And it may be conjectured, from the willingness with which he has perpetuated the memory of his exile, that its cause was such as gave him no shame.

He took both the usual degrees; that of Bachelor in 1628, and that of Master in 1632; but he left the university with no kindness for its institution, alienated either by the injudicious severity of his governors, or his own captious perverseness. The cause cannot now be known, but the effect appears in his writings. His scheme of education, inscribed to Hartlib, supersedes all academical instruction, being intended to comprise the whole time which men usually spend in literature, from their entrance upon grammar, *till they proceed, as it is called, Masters of Arts.* And in his Discourse *on the likeliest Way to remove Hirelings out of the Church*, he ingeniously proposes, that "the profits of the lands for-

feited by the act for superstitious uses should be applied to such academies all over the land where languages and arts may be taught together; so that youth may be at once brought up to a competency of learning and an honest trade, by which means such of them as had the gift, being enabled to support themselves (without tithes) by the latter, may, by the help of the former, become worthy preachers."

One of his objections to academical education, as it was then conducted, is, that men designed for orders in the Church were permitted to act plays, "writhing and unboning their clergy limbs to all the antick and dishonest gestures of Trincalos*, buffoons, and bawds, prostituting the shame of that ministry which they had, or were near having, to the eyes of courtiers and court ladies, their grooms and mademoiselles."

This is sufficiently peevish in a man, who, when he mentions his exile from the college, relates, with great luxuriance, the compensation which the pleasures of the theatre afford him. Plays were therefore only criminal when they were acted by academicks.

He went to the university with a design of entering into the church, but in time altered his mind; for he declared, that whoever became a clergyman must, "subscribe slave, and take an oath withal,

* By the mention of this name, he evidently refers to Albumazar, acted at Cambridge in 1614. Ignoramus and other plays were performed at the same time. The practice was then very frequent. The last dramatick performance at either University was "The Grateful Fair," written by Christopher Smart, and represented at Pembroke College, Cambridge, about 1747. R.

which, unless he took with a conscience that could retch, he must straight perjure himself. He thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing."

These expressions are, I find, applied to the subscription of the Articles; but it seems more probable that they relate to canonical obedience. I know not any of the articles which seem to thwart his opinions: but the thoughts of obedience, whether canonical or civil, raised his indignation.

His unwillingness to engage in the ministry, perhaps not yet advanced to a settled resolution of declining it, appears in a letter to one of his friends, who had reproved his suspended and dilatory life, which he seems to have imputed to an insatiable curiosity, and fantastic luxury of various knowledge. To this he writes a cool and plausible answer, in which he endeavours to persuade him, that the delay proceeds not from the delights of desultory study, but from the desire of obtaining more fitness for his task; and that he goes on, "not taking thought of being late, so it gives advantage to be more fit."

When he left the university he returned to his father, then residing at Horton in Buckinghamshire, with whom he lived five years, in which time he is said to have read all the Greek and Latin writers. With what limitations this universality is to be understood, who shall inform us?

It might be supposed, that he who read so much should have done nothing else; but Milton found time to write the Masque of Comus, which was pre-

sented at Ludlow, then the residence of the Lord President of Wales in 1634; and had the honour of being acted by the Earl of Bridgewater's sons and daughter. The fiction is derived from Homer's *Circe**; but we never can refuse to any modern the liberty of borrowing from Homer:

——a quo ceu fonte perenni
Vatum Pieriis ora rigantur aquis.

His next production was *Lycidas*, an elegy, written

* It has nevertheless its foundation in reality. The earl of Bridgewater being President of Wales in the year 1634, had his residence at Ludlow-castle in Shropshire, at which time lord Brackly and Mr. Egerton, his sons, and lady Alice Egerton, his daughter, passing through a place called the Hay-wood forest, or Haywood in Herefordshire, were benighted, and the lady for a short time lost: this accident being related to their father upon their arrival at his castle, Milton, at the request of his friend Henry Lawes, who taught music in the family, wrote this masque. Lawes set it to music, and it was acted on Michaelmas night: the two brothers, the young lady, and Lawes himself, bearing each a part in the representation.

The lady Alice Egerton became afterwards the wife of the earl of Carbury, who, at his seat called Golden-grove, in Caermarthenshire, harboured Dr. Jeremy Taylor in the time of the Usurpation. Among the doctor's sermons is one on her death, in which her character is finely pourtrayed. Her sister, lady Mary, was given in marriage to lord Herbert of Cherbury.

Notwithstanding Dr. Johnson's assertion, that the fiction is derived from Homer's Circe, it may be conjectured, that it was rather taken from the Comus of Erycius Puteanus, in which, under the fiction of a dream, the characters of Comus and his attendants are delineated, and the delights of sensualists exposed and reprobated. This little tract was published at Louvain in 1611, and afterwards at Oxford in 1634, the very year in which Milton's Comus was written. H.

Milton evidently was indebted to the "Old Wives' Tale" of George Peele for the plan of Comus. R.

in 1637, on the death of Mr. King, the son of Sir John King, secretary for Ireland in the time of Elizabeth, James, and Charles. King was much a favourite at Cambridge, and many of the wits joined to do honour to his memory. Milton's acquaintance with the Italian writers may be discovered by a mixture of longer and shorter verses, according to the rules of Tuscan poetry, and his malignity to the Church by some lines which are interpreted as threatening its extermination.

He is supposed about this time to have written his *Arcades;* for, while he lived at Horton, he used sometimes to steal from his studies a few days, which he spent at Harefield, the house of the Countess Dowager of Derby, where the *Arcades* made part of a dramatic entertainment.

He began now to grow weary of the country, and had some purpose of taking chambers in the Inns of Court, when the death of his mother set him at liberty to travel, for which he obtained his father's consent, and Sir Henry Wotton's directions; with the celebrated precept of prudence, *i pensieri stretti, ed il viso sciolto;* "thoughts close, and looks loose."

In 1638 he left England, and went first to Paris; where, by the favour of Lord Scudamore, he had the opportunity of visiting Grotius, then residing at the French Court as ambassador from Christina of Sweden. From Paris he hasted into Italy, of which he had with particular diligence studied the language and literature; and, though he seems to have intended a very quick perambulation of the country, staid two months at Florence; where he found his way into the academies, and produced his composi-

tions with such applause as appears to have exalted him in his own opinion, and confirmed him in the hope, that, "by labour and intense study, which," says he, "I take to be my portion in this life, joined with a strong propensity of nature," he might "leave something so written to after-times, as they should not willingly let it die."

It appears, in all his writings, that he had the usual concomitant of great abilities, a lofty and steady confidence in himself, perhaps not without some contempt of others; for scarcely any man ever wrote so much, and praised so few. Of his praise he was very frugal; as he set its value high, and considered his mention of a name as a security against the waste of time, and a certain preservative from oblivion.

At Florence he could not indeed complain that his merit wanted distinction. Carlo Dati presented him with an encomiastic inscription, in the tumid lapidary style; and Francini wrote him an ode, of which the first stanza is only empty noise; the rest are perhaps too diffuse on common topicks: but the last is natural and beautiful.

From Florence he went to Sienna, and from Sienna to Rome, where he was again received with kindness by the Learned and the Great. Holstenius, the keeper of the Vatican Library, who had resided three years at Oxford, introduced him to Cardinal Barberini; and he, at a musical entertainment, waited for him at the door, and led him by the hand into the assembly. Here Selvaggi praised him in a distich, and Salsilli in a tetrastick; neither of them of

much value. The Italians were gainers by this literary commerce; for the encomiums with which Milton repaid Salsilli, though not secure against a stern grammarian, turn the balance indisputably in Milton's favour.

Of these Italian testimonies, poor as they are, he was proud enough to publish them before his poems; though he says, he cannot be suspected but to have known that they were said *non tam de se, quam supra se.*

At Rome, as at Florence, he staid only two months; a time indeed sufficient, if he desired only to ramble with an explainer of its antiquities, or to view palaces and count pictures; but certainly too short for the contemplation of learning, policy, or manners.

From Rome he passed on to Naples in company of a hermit, a companion from whom little could be expected; yet to him Milton owed his introduction to Manso marquis of Villa, who had been before the patron of Tasso. Manso was enough delighted with his accomplishments to honour him with a sorry distich, in which he commends him for every thing but his religion: and Milton, in return, addressed him in a Latin poem, which must have raised an high opinion of English elegance and literature.

His purpose was now to have visited Sicily and Greece; but, hearing of the differences between the king and parliament, he thought it proper to hasten home, rather than pass his life in foreign amusements, while his countrymen were contending for their rights. He therefore came back to Rome, though the merchants informed him of plots laid

against him by the Jesuits, for the liberty of his conversations on religion. He had sense enough to judge that there was no danger, and therefore kept on his way, and acted as before, neither obtruding nor shunning controversy. He had perhaps given some offence by visiting Galileo, then a prisoner in the Inquisition for philosophical heresy; and at Naples he was told by Manso, that by his declarations on religious questions, he had excluded himself from some distinctions which he should otherwise have paid him. But such conduct, though it did not please, was yet sufficiently safe; and Milton staid two months more at Rome, and went on to Florence without molestation.

From Florence he visited Lucca. He afterwards went to Venice; and, having sent away a collection of musick and other books, travelled to Geneva, which he probably considered as the metropolis of orthodoxy.

Here he reposed as in a congenial element, and became acquainted with John Diodati and Frederick Spanheim, two learned professors of Divinity. From Geneva he passed through France; and came home, after an absence of a year and three months.

At his return he heard of the death of his friend Charles Diodati; a man whom it is reasonable to suppose of great merit, since he was thought by Milton worthy of a poem, intituled *Epitaphium Damonis*, written with the common but childish imitation of pastoral life.

He now hired a lodging at the house of one Russel, a taylor in St. Bride's Church-yard, and undertook the education of John and Edward Phi-

lips, his sister's sons. Finding his rooms too little, he took a house and garden in Aldersgate-street *, which was not then so much out of the world as it is now; and chose his dwelling at the upper end of a passage, that he might avoid the noise of the street. Here he received more boys, to be boarded and instructed.

Let not our veneration for Milton forbid us to look with some degree of merriment on great promises and small performance, on the man who hastens home, because his countrymen are contending for their liberty, and, when he reaches the scene of action, vapours away his patriotism in a private boarding-school. This is the period of his life from which all his biographers seem inclined to shrink. They are unwilling that Milton should be degraded to a school-master; but, since it cannot be denied that he taught boys, one finds out that he taught for nothing, and another that his motive was only zeal for the propagation of learning and virtue; and all tell what they do not know to be true, only to excuse an act which no wise man will consider as in itself disgraceful. His father was alive; his allow-

* This is inaccurately expressed: Philips, and Dr. Newton after him, say a garden-house, i. e. a house situated in a garden, and of which there were, especially in the north suburbs of London, very many, if not few else. The term is technical, and frequently occurs in the Athen. and Fast. Oxon. The meaning therefore may be collected from the article Thomas Farnaby, the famous schoolmaster, of whom the author says, that he taught in Goldsmith's rents, in Cripplegate-parish, behind Redcross-street, where were large gardens and handsome houses. Milton's house in Jewin street was also a garden-house, as were indeed most of his dwellings after his settlement in London. H.

ance was not ample; and he supplied its deficiencies by an honest and useful employment.

It is told, that in the art of education he performed wonders; and a formidable list is given of the authors, Greek and Latin, that were read in Aldersgate-street by youth between ten and fifteen or sixteen years of age. Those who tell or receive these stories should consider, that nobody can be taught faster than he can learn. The speed of the horseman must be limited by the power of the horse. Every man, that has ever undertaken to instruct others, can tell what slow advances he has been able to make, and how much patience it requires to recall vagrant inattention, to stimulate sluggish indifference, and to rectify absurd misapprehension.

The purpose of Milton, as it seems, was to teach something more solid than the common literature of schools, by reading those authors that treat of physical subjects; such as the georgick, and astronomical treatises of the ancients. This was a scheme of improvement which seems to have busied many literary projectors of that age. Cowley, who had more means than Milton of knowing what was wanting to the embellishments of life, formed the same plan of education in his imaginary College.

But the truth is, that the knowledge of external nature, and the sciences which that knowledge requires or includes, are not the great or the frequent business of the human mind. Whether we provide for action or conversation, whether we wish to be useful or pleasing, the first requisite is the religious and moral knowledge of right and wrong; the next is an acquaintance with the history of mankind,

and with those examples which may be said to embody truth, and prove by events the reasonableness of opinions. [Prudence and Justice are virtues and excellencies of all times and of all places; we are perpetually moralists, but we are geometricians only by chance. Our intercourse with intellectual nature is necessary; our speculations upon matter are voluntary, and at leisure. Physiological learning is of such rare emergence, that one may know another half his life, without being able to estimate his skill in hydrostaticks or astronomy; but his moral and prudential character immediately appears.]

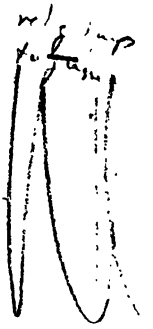
Those authors, therefore, are to be read at schools that supply most axioms of prudence, most principles of moral truth, and most materials for conversation; and these purposes are best served by poets, orators, and historians.

Let me not be censured for this digression as pedantick or paradoxical; for, if I have Milton against me, I have Socrates on my side. It was his labour to turn philosophy from the study of nature to speculations upon life; but the innovators whom I oppose are turning off attention from life to nature. They seem to think, that we are placed here to watch the growth of plants, or the motions of the stars. Socrates was rather of opinion, that what we had to learn was, how to do good, and avoid evil.

Ὅττι τοι ἐν μεγάροισι κακόντ' ἀγαθόντε τέτυκται.

Of institutions we may judge by their effects. From this wonder-working academy, I do not know that there ever proceeded any man very eminent for knowledge: its only genuine product, I believe,

is a small History of Poetry, written in Latin by his nephew Philips, of which perhaps none of my readers has ever heard.*



That in his school, as in every thing else which he undertook, he laboured with great diligence, there is no reason for doubting. One part of his method deserves general imitation. He was careful to instruct his scholars in religion. Every Sunday was spent upon theology; of which he dictated a short system, gathered from the writers that were then fashionable in the Dutch universities.

He set his pupils an example of hard study and spare diet; only now and then he allowed himself to pass a day of festivity and indulgence with some gay gentlemen of Gray's Inn.

He now began to engage in the controversies of the times, and lent his breath to blow the flames of contention. In 1641 he published a treatise of *Reformation*, in two books, against the Established Church; being willing to help the Puritans, who were, he says, *inferior to the Prelates in learning*.

Hall, bishop of Norwich, had published an *Humble Remonstrance*, in defence of Episcopacy; to which, in 1641, five ministers†, of whose names the first let-

* Johnson did not here allude to Philips's Theatrum Poetarum, as has been ignorantly supposed, but (as he himself informed Mr. Malone) to another work by the same author, intituled, "Tractatulus de Carmine Dramatico Poetarum Veterum præsertim in Choris Tragicis et veteris Comediæ. Cui subjungitur compendiosa enumeratio poetarum (saltem quorum fama maxime enituit) qui a tempore Dantis Aligerii usque ad hanc ætatem claruerunt," &c. J. B.

† Stephen Marshall, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Young, Matthew Newcomen, William Spurstow. R.

ters made the celebrated word *Smectymnuus*, gave their Answer. Of this Answer a Confutation was attempted by the learned Usher; and to the Confutation Milton published a Reply, intituled, "Of Prelatical Episcopacy, and whether it may be deduced from the Apostolical Times, by virtue of those Testimonies which are alledged to that purpose in some late Treatises, one whereof goes under the name of James Lord Bishop of Armagh."

I have transcribed this title to shew, by his contemptuous mention of Usher, that he had now adopted the puritanical savageness of manners. His next work was, "The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy, by Mr. John Milton," 1642. In this book he discovers, not with ostentatious exultation, but with calm confidence, his high opinion of his own powers; and promises to undertake something, he yet knows not what, that may be of use and honour to his country. "This," says he, "is not to be obtained but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit that can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his Seraphim, with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases. To this must be added, industrious and select reading, steady observation, and insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs; till which in some measure be compast, I refuse not to sustain this expectation." From a promise like this, at once fervid, pious, and rational, might be expected the *Paradise Lost*.

He published the same year two more pamphlets, upon the same question. To one of his antagonists, who affirms that he was *vomited out of the Univer-*

sity, he answers, in general terms: "The Fellows of the College wherein I spent some years, at my parting, after I had taken two degrees, as the manner is, signified many times how much better it would content them that I should stay.—As for the common approbation or dislike of that place, as now it is, that I should esteem or disesteem myself the more for that, too simple is the answerer, if he think to obtain with me. Of small practice were the physician who could not judge, by what she and her sister have of long time vomited, that the worser stuff she strongly keeps in her stomach, but the better she is ever kecking at, and is queasy; she vomits now out of sickness; but before it will be well with her, she must vomit by strong physick. The university, in the time of her better health, and my younger judgment, I never greatly admired, but now much less."

This is surely the language of a man who thinks that he has been injured. He proceeds to describe the course of his conduct, and the train of his thoughts; and because he has been suspected of incontinence, gives an account of his own purity: "That if I be justly charged," says he, "with this crime, it may come upon me with tenfold shame."

The style of his piece is rough, and such perhaps was that of his antagonist. This roughness he justifies, by great examples, in a long digression. Sometimes he tries to be humourous: "Lest I should take him for some chaplain in hand, some squire of the body to his prelate, one who serves not at the altar only but at the Court-cupboard, he will bestow on us a pretty model of himself; and sets me out half a dozen ptisical mottoes, wherever he had them, hopping

short in the measure of convulsion fits; in which labour the agony of his wit having escaped narrowly, instead of well-sized periods, he greets us with a quantity of thumb-ring poesies.—And thus ends this section, or rather dissection, of himself." Such is the controversial merriment of Milton; his gloomy seriousness is yet more offensive. Such is his malignity, *that hell grows darker at his frown.*

His father, after Reading was taken by Essex, came to reside in his house; and his school increased. At Whitsuntide, in his thirty-fifth year, he married Mary the daughter of Mr. Powel, a justice of the peace in Oxfordshire. He brought her to town with him, and expected all the advantages of a conjugal life. The lady, however, seems not much to have delighted in the pleasures of spare diet and hard study; for, as Philips relates, "having for a month led a philosophick life, after having been used at home to a great house, and much company and joviality, her friends, possibly by her own desire, made earnest suit to have her company the remaining part of the summer; which was granted, upon a promise of her return at Michaelmas."

Milton was too busy to much miss his wife: he pursued his studies; and now and then visited the Lady Margaret Leigh, whom he has mentioned in one of his sonnets. At last Michaelmas arrived; but the lady had no inclination to return to the sullen gloom of her husband's habitation, and therefore very willingly forgot her promise. He sent her a letter, but had no answer: he sent more with the same success. It could be alledged that letters miscarry; he therefore dispatched a messenger, being by this time too angry

to go himself. His messenger was sent back with some contempt. The family of the lady were Cavaliers.

In a man whose opinion of his own merit was like Milton's, less provocation than this might have raised violent resentment. Milton soon determined to repudiate her for disobedience; and, being one of those who could easily find arguments to justify inclination, published (in 1644) "The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce;" which was followed by "The Judgement of Martin Bucer, concerning Divorce;" and the next year, his "*Tetrachordon*, Expositions upon the four chief places of Scripture which treat of Marriage."

This innovation was opposed, as might be expected, by the clergy, who, then holding their famous assembly at Westminster, procured that the author should be called before the Lords; but "that house," says Wood, "whether approving the doctrine, or not favouring his accusers, did soon dismiss him."

There seems not to have been much written against him, nor any thing by any writer of eminence*. The antagonist that appeared is styled by him *A Serving Man turned Solicitor*. Howel, in his Letters, mentions the new doctrine with contempt†: and it was, I suppose, thought more worthy of derision than of confutation. He complains of this neglect in two sonnets, of which the first is contemptible, and the second not excellent.

* It was animadverted upon, but without any mention of Milton's name, by Bishop Hall, in his Cases of Conscience, Decade 4. Case 2. J. B.

† He terms the author of it a shallow-brained puppy; and thus refers to it in his Index; "Of a Noddy who wrote a book about wiving." J. B.

From this time it is observed, that he became an enemy to the Presbyterians, whom he had favoured before. He that changes his party by his humour, is not more virtuous than he that changes it by his interest: he loves himself rather than truth.

His wife and her relations now found that Milton was not an unresisting sufferer of injuries; and perceiving that he had begun to put his doctrine in practice, by courting a young woman of great accomplishments, the daughter of one Doctor Davis, who was however not ready to comply, they resolved to endeavour a re-union. He went sometimes to the house of one Blackborough, his relation, in the lane of St. Martin's-le-Grand, and at one of his usual visits was surprised to see his wife come from another room, and implore forgiveness on her knees. He resisted her intreaties for a while: "but partly," says Philips, "his own generous nature, more inclinable to reconciliation than to perseverance in anger or revenge, and partly the strong intercession of friends on both sides, soon brought him to an act of oblivion and a firm league of peace." It were injurious to omit, that Milton afterwards received her father and her brothers in his own house, when they were distressed, with other Royalists.

He published about the same time his "*Areopagitica*, a Speech of Mr. John Milton for the Liberty of unlicensed Printing." The danger of such unbounded liberty, and the danger of bounding it, have produced a problem in the science of government, which human understanding seems hitherto unable to solve. If nothing may be published but what civil authority shall have previously approved, power must always be the standard of truth: if every dreamer of inno-

vations may propagate his projects, there can be no settlement; if every murmurer at government may diffuse discontent, there can be no peace; and if every sceptick in theology may teach his follies, there can be no religion. The remedy against these evils is to punish the authors; for it is yet allowed that every society may punish, though not prevent, the publication of opinions which that society shall think pernicious; but this punishment, though it may crush the author, promotes the book; and it seems not more reasonable to leave the right of printing unrestrained because writers may be afterwards censured, than it would be to sleep with doors unbolted, because by our laws we can hang a thief.

But whatever were his engagements, civil or domestick, poetry was never long out of his thoughts. About this time (1645) a collection of his Latin and English poems appeared, in which the *Allegro* and *Penseroso*, with some others, were first published.

He had taken a large house in Barbican for the reception of scholars; but the numerous relations of his wife, to whom he generously granted refuge for a while, occupied his rooms. In time, however, they went away; "and the house again," says Philips, "now looked like a house of the Muses only, though the accession of scholars was not great. Possibly his having proceeded so far in the education of youth may have been the occasion of his adversaries calling him pedagogue and school-master; whereas it is well known he never set up for a publick school, to teach all the young fry of a parish; but only was willing to impart his learning and knowledge to his relations, and the sons of gentlemen who were his intimate

friends, and that neither his writings nor his way of teaching ever savoured in the least of pedantry."

Thus laboriously does his nephew extenuate what cannot be denied, and what might be confessed without disgrace. Milton was not a man who could become mean by a mean employment. This, however, his warmest friends seem not to have found; they therefore shift and palliate. He did not sell literature to all comers at an open shop; he was a chamber-milliner, and measured his commodities only to his friends.

Philips, evidently impatient of viewing him in this state of degradation, tells us that it was not long continued: and, to raise his character again, has a mind to invest him with military splendour: "He is much mistaken," he says, "if there was not, about this time, a design of making him an adjutant-general in Sir William Waller's army. But the new-modelling of the army proved an obstruction to the design." An event cannot be set at a much greater distance than by having been only *designed, about some time,* if a man *be not much mistaken.* Milton shall be a pedagogue no longer; for, if Philips be not much mistaken, somebody at some time designed him for a soldier.

About the time that the army was new-modelled (1645), he removed to a smaller house in Holbourn, which opened backward into Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. He is not known to have published any thing afterwards till the King's death, when, finding his murderers condemned by the Presbyterians, he wrote a treatise to justify it, and *to compose the minds of the people.*

He made some "Remarks on the Articles of Peace between Ormond and the Irish Rebels." While he contented himself to write, he perhaps did only what his conscience dictated; and if he did not very vigilantly watch the influence of his own passions, and the gradual prevalence of opinions, first willingly admitted, and then habitually indulged; if objections, by being overlooked, were forgotten, and desire superinduced conviction; he yet shared only the common weakness of mankind, and might be no less sincere than his opponents. But as faction seldom leaves a man honest, however it might find him, Milton is suspected of having interpolated the book called *Icon Basilike*, which the Council of State, to whom he was now made Latin secretary, employed him to censure, by inserting a prayer taken from Sidney's *Arcadia*, and imputing it to the King; whom he charges, in his *Iconoclastes*, with the use of this prayer, as with a heavy crime, in the indecent language with which prosperity had emboldened the advocates for rebellion to insult all that is venerable or great: "Who would have imagined so little fear in him of the true all-seeing Deity—as, immediately before his death, to pop into the hands of the grave bishop that attended him, as a special relique of his saintly exercises, a prayer stolen word for word from the mouth of a Heathen woman praying to a Heathen God?"

The papers which the King gave to Dr. Juxon on the scaffold the Regicides took away, so that they were at least the publishers of this prayer; and Dr. Birch, who had examined the question with great care, was inclined to think them the forgers. The use of it by adaptation was innocent; and they who could so

noisily censure it, with a little extension of their malice could contrive what they wanted to accuse.

King Charles the Second, being now sheltered in Holland, employed Salmasius, professor of polite learning at Leyden, to write a defence of his father and of monarchy; and, to excite his industry, gave him, as was reported, a hundred Jacobuses. Salmasius was a man of skill in languages, knowledge of antiquity, and sagacity of emendatory criticism, almost exceeding all hope of human attainment; and having, by excessive praises, been confirmed in great confidence of himself, though he probably had not much considered the principles of society or the rights of government, undertook the employment without distrust of his own qualifications; and, as his expedition in writing was wonderful, in 1649 published *Defensio Regis*.

To this Milton was required to write a sufficient answer; which he performed (1651) in such a manner, that Hobbes declared himself unable to decide whose language was best, or whose arguments were worst. In my opinion, Milton's periods are smoother, neater, and more pointed; but he delights himself with teasing his adversary as much as with confuting him. He makes a foolish allusion of Salmasius, whose doctrine he considers as servile and unmanly, to the stream of *Salmacis*, which, whoever entered, left half his virility behind him. Salmasius was a Frenchman, and was unhappily married to a scold. *Tu es Gallus*, says Milton, *et, ut aiunt, nimium gallinaceus*. But his supreme pleasure is to tax his adversary, so renowned for criticism, with vicious La-

tin. He opens his book with telling that he has used *Persona*, which, according to Milton, signifies only a *Mask*, in a sense not known to the Romans, by applying it as we apply *Person*. But as Nemesis is always on the watch, it is memorable that he has enforced the charge of a solecism by an expression in itself grossly solecistical, when for one of those supposed blunders, he says, as Ker, and I think some one before him, has remarked, *propino te grammatistis tuis* vapulandum*. From *vapulo*, which has a passive sense, *vapulandus* can never be derived. No man forgets his original trade: the rights of nations, and of kings, sink into questions of grammar, if grammarians discuss them.

Milton, when he undertook this answer, was weak of body and dim of sight; but his will was forward, and what was wanting of health was supplied by zeal. He was rewarded with a thousand pounds, and his book was much read; for paradox, recommended by spirit and elegance, easily gains attention; and he, who told every man that he was equal to his King, could hardly want an audience.

That the performance of Salmasius was not dispersed with equal rapidity, or read with equal eagerness, is very credible. He taught only the stale doctrine of authority, and the unpleasing duty of submission; and he had been so long not only the monarch but the tyrant of literature, that almost all

* The work here referred to is "Selectarum de Linguâ Latinâ Observationum Libri duo. Ductu et curâ Joannis Ker, 1719." Ker observes, that Vapulandum is "Pinguis solæcismus." J. B.

mankind were delighted to find him defied and insulted by a new name, not yet considered as any one's rival. If Christina, as is said, commended the *Defence of the People*, her purpose must be to torment Salmasius, who was then at court; for neither her civil station, nor her natural character, could dispose her to favour the doctrine, who was by birth a queen, and by temper despotick.

That Salmasius was, from the appearance of Milton's book, treated with neglect, there is not much proof; but to a man, so long accustomed to admiration, a little praise of his antagonist would be sufficiently offensive, and might incline him to leave Sweden, from which, however, he was dismissed, not with any mark of contempt, but with a train of attendance scarcely less than regal.

He prepared a reply, which, left as it was imperfect, was published by his son in the year of the Restoration. In the beginning, being probably most in pain for his Latinity, he endeavours to defend his use of the word *persona*; but, if I remember right, he misses a better authority than any that he has found, that of Juvenal in his fourth satire:

> —Quid agis, cum dira et fœdior omni
> Crimine *Persona* est?

As Salmasius reproached Milton with losing his eyes in the quarrel, Milton delighted himself with the belief that he had shortened Salmasius's life, and both perhaps with more malignity than reason. Salmasius died at the Spa, Sept. 3, 1653; and, as controvertists are commonly said to be killed by their

last dispute, Milton was flattered with the credit of destroying him.

Cromwell had now dismissed the parliament by the authority of which he had destroyed monarchy, and commenced monarch himself, under the title of Protector, but with kingly and more than kingly power. That his authority was lawful, never was pretended: he himself founded his right only in necessity; but Milton, having now tasted the honey of publick employment, would not return to hunger and philosophy, but, continuing to exercise his office under a manifest usurpation, betrayed to his power that liberty which he had defended. Nothing can be more just than that rebellion should end in slavery; that he, who had justified the murder of his king, for some acts which seemed to him unlawful, should now sell his services, and his flatteries, to a tyrant, of whom it was evident that he could do nothing lawful.

He had now been blind for some years; but his vigour of intellect was such, that he was not disabled to discharge his office of Latin secretary, or continue his controversies. His mind was too eager to be diverted, and too strong to be subdued.

About this time his first wife died in child-bed, having left him three daughters. As he probably did not much love her, he did not long continue the appearance of lamenting her; but after a short time married Catharine, the daughter of one captain Woodcock of Hackney; a woman doubtless educated in opinions like his own. She died, within a year, of childbirth, or some distemper that followed it;

and her husband honoured her memory with a poor sonnet.

The first reply to Milton's *Defensio Populi* was published in 1651, called "Apologia pro Rege & Populo Anglicano, contra Johannis Polypragmatici (alias Miltoni) defensionem destructivam Regis et Populi." Of this the author was not known; but Milton and his nephew Philips, under whose name he published an answer so much corrected by him that it might be called his own, imputed it to Bramhal; and, knowing him no friend to regicides, thought themselves as liberty to treat him as if they had known what they only suspected.

Next year appeared *Regii Sanguinis clamor ad Cœlum.* Of this the author was Peter du Moulin, who was afterwards prebendary of Canterbury; but Morus, or More, a French minister, having the care of its publication, was treated as the writer by Milton in his *Defensio Secunda,* and overwhelmed by such violence of invective, that he began to shrink under the tempest, and gave his persecutors the means of knowing the true author. Du Moulin was now in great danger; but Milton's pride operated against his malignity; and both he and his friends were more willing that Du Moulin should escape than that he should be convicted of mistake.

In this second Defence he shews that his eloquence is not merely satirical; the rudeness of his invective is equalled by the grossness of his flattery. "Deserimur, Cromuelle, tu solus superes, ad te summa nostrarum rerum rediit, in te solo consistit, insuperabili tuæ virtuti cedimus cuncti, nemine vel obloquente, nisi qui æquales inæqualis ipse honores

sibi quærit, aut digniori concessos invidet, aut non intelligit nihil esse in societate hominum magis vel Deo gratum, vel rationi consentaneum, esse in civitate nihil æquius, nihil utilius, quam potiri rerum dignissimum. Eum te agnoscunt omnes, Cromuelle, ea tu civis maximus et gloriosissimus*, dux publici consilii, exercituum fortissimorum imperator, pater patriæ gessisti. Sic tu spontanea bonorum omnium, et animitus missa voce salutaris."

Cæsar, when he assumed the perpetual dictatorship, had not more servile or more elegant flattery. A translation may shew its servility; but its elegance is less attainable. Having exposed the unskilfulness or selfishness of the former government, "We were left," says Milton, "to ourselves: the whole national interest fell into your hands, and subsists only in your abilities. To your virtue, overpowering and resistless, every man gives way, except some who, without equal qualifications, aspire to equal honours, who envy the distinctions of merit greater than their own, or who have yet to learn, that in the coalition of human society nothing is more pleasing to God, or more agreeable to reason, than that the highest mind should have the sovereign power. Such, Sir, are you by general confession; such are the things atchieved by you, the greatest and most glorious of our countrymen, the director of our public councils, the leader of unconquered armies, the father of your country;

* It may be doubted whether *gloriosissimus* be here used with Milton's boasted purity. *Res gloriosa* is an *illustrious thing*; but *vir gloriosus* is *commonly* a *braggart*, as in *miles gloriosus*. Dr. J.

for by that title does every good man hail you with sincere and voluntary praise."

Next year, having defended all that wanted defence, he found leisure to defend himself. He undertook his own vindication against More, whom he declares in his title to be justly called the author of the *Regii Sanguinis Clamor*. In this there is no want of vehemence or eloquence, nor does he forget his wonted wit. "Morus est? an Momus? an uterque idem est?" He then remembers that *Morus* is Latin for a Mulberry-tree, and hints at the known transformation:

——Poma alba ferebat
Quæ post nigra tulit Morus.

With this piece ended his controversies; and he from this time gave himself up to his private studies and his civil employment.

As secretary to the Protector, he is supposed to have written the declaration of the reasons for a war with Spain. His agency was considered as of great importance; for, when a treaty with Sweden was artfully suspended, the delay was publickly imputed to Mr. Milton's indisposition; and the Swedish agent was provoked to express his wonder, that only one man in England could write Latin, and that man blind.

Being now forty-seven years old, and seeing himself disencumbered from external interruptions, he seems to have recollected his former purposes, and to have resumed three great works which he had planned for his future employment; an epick poem, the history of his country, and a dictionary of the Latin tongue.

To collect a dictionary, seems a work of all others least practicable in a state of blindness, because it depends upon perpetual and minute inspection and collation. Nor would Milton probably have begun it, after he had lost his eyes; but, having had it always before him, he continued it, says Philips, *almost to his dying-day; but the papers were so discomposed and deficient, that they could not be fitted for the press.* The compilers of the Latin dictionary, printed at Cambridge, had the use of those collections in three folios; but what was their fate afterwards is not known.*

To compile a history from various authors, when they can only be consulted by other eyes, is not easy, nor possible, but with more skilful and attentive help than can be commonly obtained; and it was probably the difficulty of consulting and comparing that stopped Milton's narrative at the Conquest; a period

* The Cambridge Dictionary, published in 4to. 1693, is no other than a copy, with some small additions, of that of Dr. Adam Littleton in 1685, by sundry persons, of whom, though their names are concealed, there is great reason to conjecture that Milton's nephew, Edward Philips, is one: for it is expressly said by Wood, Fasti, vol. I. p. 266, that Milton's "Thesaurus" came to his hands; and it is asserted in the preface thereto, that the editors thereof had the use of three large folios in manuscript, collected and digested into alphabetical order by Mr. John Milton.

It has been remarked, that the additions, together with the preface above-mentioned, and a large part of the title of the "Cam- "bridge Dictionary," have been incorporated and printed with the subsequent editions of "Littleton's Dictionary," till that of 1735. Vid. Biogr. Brit. 2985, in not. So that, for aught that appears to the contrary, Philips was the last possessor of Milton's MS. H.

at which affairs were not yet very intricate, nor authors very numerous.

For the subject of his epick poem, after much deliberation, *long chusing, and beginning late,* he fixed upon *Paradise Lost;* a design so comprehensive, that it could be justified only by success. He had once designed to celebrate King Arthur, as he hints in his verses to Mansus; but *Arthur was reserved,* says Fenton, *to another destiny.**

It appears, by some sketches of poetical projects left in manuscript, and to be seen in a library† at Cambridge, that he had digested his thoughts on this subject into one of those wild dramas which were antiently called Mysteries‡; and Philips had seen what he terms part of a tragedy, beginning with the first ten lines of Satan's address to the Sun. These mysteries consist of allegorical persons; such as *Justice, Mercy, Faith.* Of the tragedy or mystery of "Paradise Lost" there are two plans:

The Persons.	The Persons.
Michael.	Moses.
Chorus of Angels.	Divine Justice, Wisdom,
Heavenly Love.	Heavenly Love.
Lucifer.	The Evening Star, Hesperus.
Adam, Eve, with the Serpent.	Chorus of Angels.
Conscience.	Lucifer.
Death.	Adam.

* *Id est,* to be the subject of an heroick poem, written by Sir Richard Blackmore. H.

† Trinity College. R.

‡ The dramas in which Justice, Mercy, Faith, &c. were introduced, were Moralities, not Mysteries. MALONE.

Labour,
Sickness,
Discontent,
Ignorance,
with others; } Mutes.
Faith.
Hope.
Charity.

Eve.
Conscience.
Labour,
Sickness,
Discontent,
Ignorance, } Mutes.
Fear,
Death,
Faith.
Hope.
Charity.

Paradise Lost.

The Persons.

Moses προλογίζει, recounting how he assumed his true body; that it corrupts not, because it is with God in the mount: declares the like of Enoch and Elijah; besides the purity of the place, that certain pure winds, dews, and clouds, preserve it from corruption; whence exhorts to the sight of God; tells they cannot see Adam in the state of innocence, by reason of their sin.

Justice,
Mercy,
Wisdom, } debating what should become of man if he fall.

Chorus of Angels singing a hymn of the Creation.

ACT II.

Heavenly Love.
Evening Star.
Chorus sing the marriage-song, and describe Paradise.

ACT III.

Lucifer contriving Adam's ruin.
Chorus fears for Adam, and relates Lucifer's rebellion and fall.

ACT IV.

Adam, Eve, } fallen.
Conscience cites them to God's examination.
Chorus bewails, and tells the good Adam has lost.

ACT V.

Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise.
———— presented by an angel with
Labour, Grief, Hatred, Envy, War, Famine, Pestilence, Sickness, Discontent, Ignorance, Fear, Death, } Mutes.
To whom he gives their names. Likewise Winter, Heat, Tempest, &c.
Faith, Hope, Charity, } comfort him, and instruct him.
Chorus briefly concludes.

Such was his first design, which could have produced only an allegory, or mystery. The following sketch seems to have attained more maturity.

Adam unparadised:

The angel Gabriel, either descending or entering; shewing, since this globe was created, his frequency

as much on earth as in heaven; describes Paradise. Next, the Chorus, shewing the reason of his coming to keep his watch in Paradise, after Lucifer's rebellion, by command from God; and withal expressing his desire to see and know more concerning this excellent new creature, man. The angel Gabriel, as by his name signifying a prince of power, tracing Paradise with a more free office, passes by the station of the Chorus, and, desired by them, relates what he knew of man; as the creation of Eve, with their love and marriage. After this, Lucifer appears; after his overthrow, bemoans himself, seeks revenge on man. The Chorus prepare resistance at his first approach. At last, after discourse of enmity on either side, he departs: whereat the Chorus sings of the battle and victory in Heaven, against him and his accomplices: as before, after the first act, was sung a hymn of the creation. Here again may appear Lucifer, relating and exulting in what he had done to the destruction of man. Man next, and Eve having by this time been seduced by the Serpent, appears confusedly covered with leaves. Conscience in a shape accuses him; Justice cites him to the place whither Jehovah called for him. In the mean while, the Chorus entertains the stage, and is informed by some angel the manner of the fall. Here the Chorus bewails Adam's fall; Adam then and Eve return; accuse one another; but especially Adam lays the blame to his wife; is stubborn in his offence. Justice appears, reasons with him, convinces him. The Chorus admonisheth Adam, and bids him beware Lucifer's example of impeni-

tence. The angel is sent to banish them out of Paradise; but before causes to pass before his eyes, in shapes, a mask of all the evils of this life and world. He is humbled, relents, despairs; at last appears Mercy, comforts him, promises the Messiah; then calls in Faith, Hope, and Charity; instructs him; he repents, gives God the glory, submits to his penalty. The Chorus briefly concludes. Compare this with the former draught.

These are very imperfect rudiments of "Paradise Lost;" but it is pleasant to see great works in their seminal state, pregnant with latent possibilities of excellence; nor could there be any more delightful entertainment than to trace their gradual growth and expansion, and to observe how they are sometimes suddenly advanced by accidental hints, and sometimes slowly improved by steady meditation.

Invention is almost the only literary labour which blindness cannot obstruct, and therefore he naturally solaced his solitude by the indulgence of his fancy, and the melody of his numbers. He had done what he knew to be necessarily previous to poetical excellence; he had made himself acquainted with *seemly arts and affairs*; his comprehension was extended by various knowledge, and his memory stored with intellectual treasures. He was skilful in many languages, and had by reading and composition attained the full mastery of his own. He would have wanted little help from books, had he retained the power of perusing them.

But while his greater designs were advancing, having now, like many other authors, caught the

love of publication, he amused himself, as he could, with little productions. He sent to the press (1658) a manuscript of Raleigh, called *The Cabinet Council;* and next year gratified his malevolence to the clergy, by a "Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Cases, and the Means of removing Hirelings out of the Church."

Oliver was now dead; Richard was constrained to resign: the system of extemporary government, which had been held together only by force, naturally fell into fragments when that force was taken away; and Milton saw himself and his cause in equal danger. But he had still hope of doing something. He wrote letters, which Toland has published, to such men as he thought friends to the new commonwealth; and even in the year of the Restoration he *bated no jot of heart or hope,* but was fantastical enough to think that the nation, agitated as it was, might be settled by a pamphlet, called "A ready and easy Way to establish a free Commonwealth;" which was, however, enough considered to be both seriously and ludicrously answered.

The obstinate enthusiasm of the commonwealthmen was very remarkable. When the King was apparently returning, Harrington, with a few associates as fanatical as himself, used to meet, with all the gravity of political importance, to settle an equal government by rotation; and Milton, kicking when he could strike no longer, was foolish enough to publish, a few weeks before the Restoration, *Notes* upon a sermon preached by one Griffiths, intituled, *The Fear of God and the King.* To these notes

an answer was written by L'Estrange, in a pamphlet petulantly called *No Blind Guides.*

But whatever Milton could write, or men of greater activity could do, the King was now about to be restored with the irresistible approbation of the people. He was therefore no longer secretary, and was consequently obliged to quit the house which he held by his office; and, proportioning his sense of danger to his opinion of the importance of his writings, thought it convenient to seek some shelter, and hid himself for a time in Bartholomew-Close, by West-Smithfield.

I cannot but remark a kind of respect, perhaps unconsciously, paid to this great man by his biographers: every house in which he resided is historically mentioned, as if it were an injury to neglect naming any place that he honoured by his presence.

The King, with lenity of which the world has had perhaps no other example, declined to be the judge or avenger of his own or his father's wrongs; and promised to admit into the Act of Oblivion all, except those whom the Parliament should except; and the Parliament doomed none to capital punishment but the wretches who had immediately co-operated in the murder of the King. Milton was certainly not one of them; he had only justified what they had done.

This justification was indeed sufficiently offensive; and (June 16) an order was issued to seize Milton's *Defence,* and Goodwin's *Obstructors of Justice,* another book of the same tendency, and burn them by the common hangman. The attorney-general was ordered to prosecute the authors: but Milton was not seized, nor perhaps very diligently pursued.

Not long after (August 19) the flutter of innumer-

able bosoms was stilled by an act, which the King, that his mercy might want no recommendation of elegance, rather called an *Act of Oblivion* than of Grace. Goodwin was named, with nineteen more, as incapacitated for any publick trust; but of Milton there was no exception.*

Of this tenderness shewn to Milton, the curiosity of mankind has not forborne to enquire the reason. Burnet thinks he was forgotten; but this is another instance which may confirm Dalrymple's observation, who says, "that whenever Burnet's narrations are examined, he appears to be mistaken."

Forgotten he was not; for his prosecution was ordered; it must be therefore by design that he was included in the general oblivion. He is said to have had friends in the House, such as Marvel, Morrice, and Sir Thomas Clarges: and undoubtedly a man like him must have had influence. A very particular story of his escape is told by Richardson † in his Memoirs, which he received from Pope, as delivered by Betterton, who might have heard it from Davenant. In the war between the King and Parliament, Davenant was made prisoner and condemned to die; but was spared at the request of Milton.

* Philips says expressly, that Milton was excepted and disqualified from bearing any office; but Toland says he was not excepted at all, and consequently included in the General Pardon, or Act of Indemnity, passed the 29th of August, 1660. Toland is right, for I find Goodwin and Ph. Nye, the minister, excepted in the Act, but Milton not named. However, he obtained a special pardon in December, 1660, which passed the Privy Seal, but not the Great Seal. MALONE.

† It was told before by A. Wood in Ath. Oxon. vol. ii. p. 412, second edition. C.

When the turn of success brought Milton into the like danger, Davenant repayed the benefit by appearing in his favour. Here is a reciprocation of generosity and gratitude so pleasing, that the tale makes its own way to credit. But, if help were wanted, I know not where to find it. The danger of Davenant is certain from his own relation; but of his escape there is no account*. Betterton's narration can be traced no higher; it is not known that he had it from Davenant. We are told that the benefit exchanged was life for life; but it seems not certain that Milton's life ever was in danger. Goodwin, who had committed the same kind of crime, escaped with incapacitation; and, as exclusion from publick trust is a punishment which the power of government can commonly inflict without the help of a particular law, it required no great interest to exempt Milton from a censure little more than verbal. Something may be reasonably ascribed to veneration and compassion; to veneration of his abilities, and compassion for his distresses, which made it fit to forgive his malice for his learning. He was now poor and blind; and who would pursue with violence an illustrious enemy, depressed by fortune, and disarmed by nature?†

* That Milton saved Davenant is attested by Aubrey, and by Wood from him, but none of them say that Davenant saved Milton; this is Richardson's assertion merely. MALONE.

† A different account of the means by which Milton secured himself is given by an historian lately brought to light. "Milton, Latin secretary to Cromwell, distinguished by his writings in favour of the rights and liberties of the people, pretended to be dead, and had a publick funeral procession. The King applauded his policy in escaping the punishment of death, by a seasonable show of dying." *Cunningham's History of Great Britain*, vol. i. p. 14. R.

The publication of the Act of Oblivion put him in the same condition with his fellow-subjects. He was, however, upon some pretence not now known, in the custody of the serjeant in December; and when he was released, upon his refusal of the fees demanded, he and the serjeant were called before the House. He was now safe within the shade of oblivion, and knew himself to be as much out of the power of a griping officer, as any other man. How the question was determined is not known. Milton would hardly have contended, but that he knew himself to have right on his side.

He then removed to Jewin-street, near Aldersgate-street; and, being blind and by no means wealthy, wanted a domestick companion and attendant; and therefore, by the recommendation of Dr. Paget, married Elizabeth Minshul, of a gentleman's family in Cheshire, probably without a fortune. All his wives were virgins; for he has declared that he thought it gross and indelicate to be a second husband: upon what other principles his choice was made cannot now be known; but marriage afforded not much of his happiness. The first wife left him in disgust, and was brought back only by terror; the second, indeed, seems to have been more a favourite, but her life was short. The third, as Philips relates, oppressed his children in his life-time, and cheated them at his death.

Soon after his marriage, according to an obscure story, he was offered the continuance of his employment, and, being pressed by his wife to accept it, answered, "You, like other women, want to ride in your coach; my wish is to live and die an honest man."

If he considered the Latin secretary as exercising any of the powers of government, he that had shared authority either with the Parliament or Cromwell might have forborne to talk very loudly of his honesty; and if he thought the office purely ministerial, he certainly might have honestly retained it under the king. But this tale has too little evidence to deserve a disquisition; large offers and sturdy rejections are among the most common topicks of falsehood.

He had so much either of prudence or gratitude, that he forbore to disturb the new settlement with any of his political or ecclesiastical opinions, and from this time devoted himself to poetry and literature. Of his zeal for learning in all its parts, he gave a proof by publishing, the next year (1661), "Accidence commenced Grammar;" a little book which has nothing remarkable, but that its author, who had been lately defending the supreme powers of his country, and was then writing "Paradise Lost," could descend from his elevation to rescue children from the perplexity of grammatical confusion, and the trouble of lessons unnecessarily repeated *.

About this time Elwood the Quaker, being recommended to him as one who would read Latin to him for the advantage of his conversation, attended him every afternoon except on Sundays. Milton, who, in his letter to Hartlib, had declared, that *to*

* Gildon, in his continuation of Langbaine's account of the Dramatick Poets, 8vo. 1693, says that he had been told that Milton, after the Restoration, kept a school at or near Greenwich. The publication of an Accidence at that period gives some countenance to this tradition. MALONE.

read Latin with an English mouth is as ill a hearing as Law French, required that Elwood should learn and practise the Italian pronunciation, which, he said, was necessary if he would talk with foreigners. This seems to have been a task troublesome without use. There is little reason for preferring the Italian pronunciation to our own, except that it is more general; and to teach it to an Englishman is only to make him a foreigner at home. He who travels, if he speaks Latin, may so soon learn the sounds which every native gives it, that he need make no provision before his journey; and if strangers visit us, it is their business to practise such conformity to our modes as they expect from us in their own countries. Elwood complied with the directions, and improved himself by his attendance; for he relates, that Milton, having a curious ear, knew by his voice when he read what he did not understand, and would stop him, and *open the most difficult passages.*

In a short time he took a house in the Artillery Walk, leading to Bunhill Fields; the mention of which concludes the register of Milton's removals and habitations. He lived longer in this place than in any other.

He was now busied by "Paradise Lost." Whence he drew the original design has been variously conjectured by men who cannot bear to think themselves ignorant of that which, at last, neither diligence nor sagacity can discover. Some find the hint in an Italian tragedy. Voltaire tells a wild and unauthorized story of a farce seen by Milton in Italy, which opened thus: *Let the Rainbow be*

the Fiddlestick of the Fiddle of Heaven *. It has been already shown, that the first conception was of a tragedy or mystery, not of a narrative, but a dramatick work, which he is supposed to have begun to reduce to its present form about the time (1655) when he finished his dispute with the defenders of the king.

He long before had promised to adorn his native country by some great performance, while he had yet perhaps no settled design, and was stimulated only by such expectations as naturally arose from the survey of his attainments, and the consciousness of his powers. What he should undertake, it was difficult to determine. He was *long chusing, and began late.*

While he was obliged to divide his time between his private studies and affairs of state, his poetical labour must have been often interrupted; and perhaps he did little more in that busy time than construct the narrative, adjust the episodes, proportion the parts, accumulate images and sentiments, and treasure in his memory, or preserve in writing, such hints as books or meditation would supply. Nothing particular is known of his intellectual operations while he was a statesman; for, having every help and accommodation at hand, he had no need of uncommon expedients.

Being driven from all publick stations, he is yet too great not to be traced by curiosity to his retire-

* It is scarcely necessary to inform the reader that this relation of Voltaire's was perfectly true, as far as relates to the existence of the play which he speaks of, namely, the Adamo of Andreini, but it is still a question whether Milton ever saw it.

J. B.

ment; where he has been found by Mr. Richardson, the fondest of his admirers, sitting "before his door in a grey coat of coarse cloth, in warm sultry weather, to enjoy the fresh air; and so, as well as in his own room, receiving the visits of the people of distinguished parts as well as quality." His visitors of high quality must now be imagined to be few; but men of parts might reasonably court the conversation of a man so generally illustrious, that foreigners are reported, by Wood, to have visited the house in Bread-street where he was born.

According to another account, he was seen in a small house, "neatly enough dressed in black clothes, sitting in a room hung with rusty green; pale but not cadaverous, with chalkstones in his hand. He said, that, if it were not for the gout, his blindness would be tolerable."

In the intervals of his pain, being made unable to use the common exercises, he used to swing in a chair, and sometimes played upon an organ.

He was now confessedly and visibly employed upon his poem, of which the progress might be noted by those with whom he was familiar; for he was obliged, when he had composed as many lines as his memory would conveniently retain, to employ some friend in writing them, having, at least for part of the time, no regular attendant. This gave opportunity to observations and reports.

Mr. Philips observes, that there was a very remarkable circumstance in the composure of Paradise Lost, "which I have a particular reason," says he, "to remember; for whereas I had the perusal of it

from the very beginning, for some years, as I went from time to time to visit him, in parcels of ten, twenty, or thirty verses at a time (which, being written by whatever hand came next, might possibly want correction as to the orthography and pointing), having, as the summer came on, not been shewed any for a considerable while, and desiring the reason thereof, was answered, that his vein never happily flowed but from the Autumnal Equinox to the Vernal; and that whatever he attempted at other times was never to his satisfaction, though he courted his fancy never so much; so that, in all the years he was about this poem, he may be said to have spent half his time therein."

Upon this relation Toland remarks, that in his opinion Philips has mistaken the time of the year; for Milton, in his Elegies, declares, that with the advance of the Spring he feels the increase of his poetical force, *redeunt in carmina vires.* To this it is answered, that Philips could hardly mistake time so well marked; and it may be added, that Milton might find different times of the year favourable to different parts of life. Mr. Richardson conceives it impossible that "such a work should be suspended for six months, or for one. It may go on faster or slower, but it must go on." By what necessity it must continually go on, or why it might not be laid aside and resumed, it is not easy to discover.

This dependance of the soul upon the seasons, those temporary and periodical ebbs and flows of intellect, may, I suppose, justly be derided as the fumes of vain imagination. *Sapiens dominabitur astris.* The author that thinks himself weather-bound will

find, with a little help from hellebore, that he is only idle or exhausted. But while this notion has possession of the head, it produces the inability which it supposes. Our powers owe much of their energy to our hopes: *possunt quia posse videntur*. When success seems attainable, diligence is enforced; but when it is admitted that the faculties are suppressed by a cross wind, or a cloudy sky, the day is given up without resistance; for who can contend with the course of Nature?

From such prepossessions Milton seems not to have been free. There prevailed in his time an opinion, that the world was in its decay, and that we have had the misfortune to be produced in the decrepitude of Nature. It was suspected that the whole creation languished, that neither trees nor animals had the height or bulk of their predecessors, and that every thing was daily sinking by gradual diminution *. Milton appears to suspect that souls partake of the general degeneracy, and is not without some fear that his book is to be written in *an age too late* for heroick poesy.†

* This opinion is, with great learning and ingenuity, refuted in a book now very little known, "An Apology or Declaration of the Power and Providence of God in the Government of the World," by Dr. George Hakewill, London, folio, 1635. The first who ventured to propagate it in this country was Dr. Gabriel Goodman, bishop of Gloucester, a man of a versatile temper, and the author of a book intituled, "The fall of Man, or the Corruption of Nature proved by Natural Reason." Lond. 1616 and 1624. quarto. He was plundered in the Usurpation, turned Roman Catholic, and died in obscurity. See Athen. Oxon. vol. I. p. 727. H.

† ———Unless *an age too late*, or cold
Climate, or years damp my intended wing.
Par. Lost. B. ix. l. 44. J. B.

Another opinion wanders about the world, and sometimes finds reception among wise men; an opinion that restrains the operations of the mind to particular regions, and supposes that a luckless mortal may be born in a degree of latitude too high or too low for wisdom or for wit. From this fancy, wild as it is, he had not wholly cleared his head, when he feared lest the *climate* of his country might be *too cold* for flights of imagination.

Into a mind already occupied by such fancies, another not more reasonable might easily find its way. He that could fear lest his genius had fallen upon too old a world, or too chill a climate, might consistently magnify to himself the influence of the seasons, and believe his faculties to be vigorous only half the year.

His submission to the seasons was at least more reasonable than his dread of decaying nature, or a frigid zone; for general causes must operate uniformly in a general abatement of mental power; if less could be performed by the writer, less likewise would content the judges of his work. Among this lagging race of frosty grovellers he might still have risen into eminence by producing something which *they should not willingly let die.* However inferior to the heroes who were born in better ages, he might still be great among his contemporaries, with the hope of growing every day greater in the dwindle of posterity. He might still be a giant among the pygmies, the one-eyed monarch of the blind.

Of his artifices of study, or particular hours of composition, we have little account, and there was perhaps little to be told. Richardson, who seems to

have been very diligent in his enquiries, but discovers always a wish to find Milton discriminated from other men, relates, that "he would sometimes lie awake whole nights, but not a verse could he make; and on a sudden his poetical faculty would rush upon him with an *impetus* or *œstrum*, and his daughter was immediately called to secure what came. At other times he would dictate perhaps forty lines in a breath, and then reduce them to half the number."

These bursts of light, and involutions of darkness, these transient and involuntary excursions and retrocessions of invention, having some appearance of deviation from the common train of Nature, are eagerly caught by the lovers of a wonder. Yet something of this inequality happens to every man in every mode of exertion, manual or mental. The mechanick cannot handle his hammer and his file at all times with equal dexterity; there are hours, he knows not why, when *his hand is out.* By Mr. Richardson's relation, casually conveyed, much regard cannot be claimed. That, in his intellectual hour, Milton called for his daughter to *secure what came,* may be questioned; for unluckily it happens to be known that his daughters were never taught to write; nor would he have been obliged, as is universally confessed, to have employed any casual visitor in disburthening his memory, if his daughter could have performed the office.

The story of reducing his exuberance has been told of other authors, and, though doubtless true of every fertile and copious mind, seems to have been gratuitously transferred to Milton.

What he has told us, and we cannot now know more, is, that he composed much of this poem in the night and morning, I suppose before his mind was disturbed with common business; and that he poured out with great fluency his *unpremeditated verse.* Versification, free, like his, from the distresses of rhyme, must, by a work so long, be made prompt and habitual; and, when his thoughts were once adjusted, the words would come at his command.

At what particular times of his life the parts of his work were written, cannot often be known. The beginning of the third book shews that he had lost his sight; and the Introduction to the seventh, that the return of the king had clouded him with discountenance: and that he was offended by the licentious festivity of the Restoration. There are no other internal notes of time. Milton, being now cleared from all effects of his disloyalty, had nothing required from him but the common duty of living in quiet, to be rewarded with the common right of protection; but this, which, when he sculked from the approach of his King, was perhaps more than he hoped, seems not to have satisfied him; for no sooner is he safe, than he finds himself in danger, *fallen on evil days and evil tongues, and with darkness and with danger compass'd round.* This darkness, had his eyes been better employed, had undoubtedly deserved compassion; but to add the mention of danger was ungrateful and unjust. He was fallen indeed on *evil days;* the time was come in which Regicides could no longer boast their wickedness. But of *evil tongues* for Milton to complain, required impudence at least equal to his other

powers; Milton, whose warmest advocates must allow, that he never spared any asperity of reproach or brutality of insolence.

But the charge itself seems to be false; for it would be hard to recollect any reproach cast upon him, either serious or ludicrous, through the whole remaining part of his life. He pursued his studies, or his amusements, without persecution, molestation, or insult. Such is the reverence paid to great abilities, however misused: they who contemplated in Milton the scholar and the wit, were contented to forget the reviler of his King.

When the plague (1665) raged in London, Milton took refuge at Chalfont in Bucks; where Elwood, who had taken the house for him, first saw a complete copy of Paradise Lost, and, having perused it, said to him, "Thou hast said a great deal upon *Paradise Lost;* what hast thou to say upon *Paradise Found?*"

Next year, when the danger of infection had ceased, he returned to Bunhill-fields, and designed the publication of his poem. A licence was necessary, and he could expect no great kindness from a chaplain of the archbishop of Canterbury. He seems, however, to have been treated with tenderness; for though objections were made to particular passages, and among them to the simile of the sun eclipsed in the first book, yet the licence was granted; and he sold his copy, April 27, 1667, to Samuel Simmons, for an immediate payment of five pounds, with a stipulation to receive five pounds more when thirteen hundred should be sold of the first edition; and again, five pounds after the sale

of the same number of the second edition; and another five pounds after the same sale of the third. None of the three editions were to be extended beyond fifteen hundred copies.

The first edition was of ten books, in a small quarto. The titles were varied from year to year; and an advertisement and the arguments of the books were omitted in some copies, and inserted in others.

The sale gave him in two years a right to his second payment, for which the receipt was signed April 26, 1669. The second edition was not given till 1674; it was printed in small octavo; and the number of books was increased to twelve, by a division of the seventh and twelfth; and some other small improvements were made. The third edition was published in 1678; and the widow, to whom the copy was then to devolve, sold all her claims to Simmons for eight pounds, according to her receipt given Dec. 21, 1680. Simmons had already agreed to transfer the whole right to Brabazon Aylmer for twenty-five pounds; and Aylmer sold to Jacob Tonson half, August 17, 1683, and half, March 24, 1690, at a price considerably enlarged. In the history of "Paradise Lost" a deduction thus minute will rather gratify than fatigue.

The slow sale and tardy reputation of this poem have been always mentioned as evidences of neglected merit, and of the uncertainty of literary fame; and enquiries have been made, and conjectures offered, about the causes of its long obscurity and late reception. But has the case been truly stated? Have not lamentation and wonder been lavished on an evil that was never felt?

That in the reigns of Charles and James the "Paradise Lost" received no public acclamations, is readily confessed. Wit and literature were on the side of the Court: and who that solicited favour or fashion would venture to praise the defender of the regicides? All that he himself could think his due, from *evil tongues* in *evil days*, was that reverential silence which was generously preserved. But it cannot be inferred, that his Poem was not read, or not, however unwillingly, admired.

The sale, if it be considered, will justify the publick. Those who have no power to judge of past times but by their own, should always doubt their conclusions. The call for books was not in Milton's age what it is in the present. To read was not then a general amusement; neither traders, nor often gentlemen, thought themselves disgraced by ignorance. The women had not then aspired to literature, nor was every house supplied with a closet of knowledge. Those, indeed, who professed learning, were not less learned than at any other time; but of that middle race of students who read for pleasure or accomplishment, and who buy the numerous products of modern typography, the number was then comparatively small. To prove the paucity of readers, it may be sufficient to remark, that the nation had been satisfied from 1623 to 1664, that is, forty-one years, with only two editions of the works of Shakspeare, which probably did not together make one thousand copies.

The sale of thirteen hundred copies in two years, in opposition to so much recent enmity, and to a style of versification new to all and disgusting to

many, was an uncommon example of the prevalence of genius. The demand did not immediately increase; for many more readers than were supplied at first the nation did not afford. Only three thousand were sold in eleven years; for it forced its way without assistance; its admirers did not dare to publish their opinion; and the opportunities now given of attracting notice by advertisements were then very few; the means of proclaiming the publication of new books have been produced by that general literature which now pervades the nation through all its ranks.

But the reputation and price of the copy still advanced, till the Revolution put an end to the secrecy of love, and "Paradise Lost" broke into open view with sufficient security of kind reception.

Fancy can hardly forbear to conjecture with what temper Milton surveyed the silent progress of his work, and marked its reputation stealing its way in a kind of subterraneous current through fear and silence. I cannot but conceive him calm and confident, little disappointed, not at all dejected, relying on his own merit with steady consciousness, and waiting without impatience the vicissitudes of opinion, and the impartiality of a future generation.

In the mean time he continued his studies, and supplied the want of sight by a very odd expedient, of which Philips gives the following account:

Mr. Philips tells us, "that though our Author had daily about him one or other to read, some persons of man's estate, who, of their own accord, greedily catched at the opportunity of being his readers, that they might as well reap the benefit

of what they read to him, as oblige him by the benefit of their reading; and others of younger years were sent by their parents to the same end; yet excusing only the eldest daughter by reason of her bodily infirmity and difficult utterance of speech (which, to say truth, I doubt was the principal cause of excusing her), the other two were condemned to the performance of reading, and exactly pronouncing of all the languages of whatever book he should, at one time or other, think fit to peruse, viz. the Hebrew (and I think the Syriac), the Greek, the Latin, the Italian, Spanish, and French. All which sorts of books to be confined to read, without understanding one word, must needs be a trial of patience almost beyond endurance. Yet it was endured by both for a long time, though the irksomeness of this employment could not be always concealed, but broke out more and more into expressions of uneasiness; so that at length they were all, even the eldest also, sent out to learn some curious and ingenious sorts of manufacture, that are proper for women to learn, particularly embroideries in gold or silver."

In the scene of misery which this mode of intellectual labour sets before our eyes, it is hard to determine whether the daughters or the father are most to be lamented. A language not understood can never be so read as to give pleasure, and very seldom so as to convey meaning. If few men would have had resolution to write books with such embarrassments, few likewise would have wanted ability to find some better expedient.

Three years after his "Paradise Lost" (1667), he

published his *History of England*, comprizing the whole fable of Geoffrey of Monmouth, and continued to the Norman Invasion. Why he should have given the first part, which he seems not to believe, and which is universally rejected, it is difficult to conjecture. The style is harsh; but it has something of rough vigour, which perhaps may often strike, though it cannot please.

On this history the licenser again fixed his claws, and before he would transmit it to the press tore out several parts. Some censures of the Saxon monks were taken away, lest they should be applied to the modern clergy; and a character of the Long Parliament, and Assembly of Divines, was excluded; of which the author gave a copy to the Earl of Anglesea, and which, being afterwards published, has been since inserted in its proper place.

The same year were printed *Paradise Regained;* and *Sampson Agonistes*, a tragedy written in imitation of the Ancients, and never designed by the author for the stage. As these poems were published by another bookseller, it has been asked, whether Simmons was discouraged from receiving them by the slow sale of the former? Why a writer changed his bookseller a hundred years ago, I am far from hoping to discover. Certainly, he who in two years sells thirteen hundred copies of a volume in quarto, bought for two payments of five pounds each, has no reason to repent his purchase.

When Milton shewed "Paradise Regained" to Elwood, "This," said he, "is owing to you; for you put it in my head by the question you put

to me at Chalfont, which otherwise I had not thought of."

His last poetical offspring was his favourite. He could not, as Elwood relates, endure to hear *Paradise Lost* preferred to *Paradise Regained.* Many causes may vitiate a writer's judgment of his own works. On that which has cost him much labour he sets a high value, because he is unwilling to think that he has been diligent in vain; what has been produced without toilsome efforts is considered with delight, as a proof of vigorous faculties and fertile invention; and the last work, whatever it be, has necessarily most of the grace of novelty. Milton, however it happened, had this prejudice, and had it to himself.

To that multiplicity of attainments, and extent of comprehension, that entitled this great author to our veneration, may be added a kind of humble dignity, which did not disdain the meanest services to literature. The epick poet, the controvertist, the politician, having already descended to accommodate children with a book of rudiments, now, in the last years of his life, composed a book of Logick for the initiation of students in philosophy; and published (1672) *Artis Logicæ plenior Institutio ad Petri Rami Methodum concinnata*; that is, "A new Scheme of Logick, according to the Method of Ramus." I know not whether, even in this book, he did not intend an act of hostility against the Universities; for Ramus was one of the first oppugners of the old philosophy, who disturbed with innovations the quiet of the schools.

His polemical disposition again revived. He had

now been safe so long, that he forgot his fears, and published "A Treatise of true Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration, and the best Means to prevent the Growth of Popery."

But this little tract is modestly written, with respectful mention of the Church of England, and an appeal to the Thirty-nine Articles. His principle of toleration is, agreement in the sufficiency of the Scriptures; and he extends it to all who, whatever their opinions are, profess to derive them from the sacred books. The Papists appeal to other testimonies, and are therefore, in his opinion, not to be permitted the liberty of either publick or private worship; for though they plead conscience, *we have no warrant*, he says, *to regard conscience, which is not grounded in Scripture.*

Those who are not convinced by his reasons, may be perhaps delighted with his wit. The term *Roman Catholick* is, he says, *one of the Pope's bulls*; *it is particular universal*, or *catholick schismatick.*

He has, however, something better. As the best preservative against Popery, he recommends the diligent perusal of the Scriptures, a duty, from which he warns the busy part of mankind not to think themselves excused.

He now reprinted his juvenile poems, with some additions.

In the last year of his life he sent to the press, seeming to take delight in publication, a collection of Familiar Epistles in Latin; to which, being too few to make a volume, he added some academical exercises, which perhaps he perused with pleasure, as they recalled to his memory the days of youth, but for

which nothing but veneration for his name could now procure a reader.

When he had attained his sixty-sixth year, the gout, with which he had been long tormented, prevailed over the enfeebled powers of nature. He died by a quiet and silent expiration, about the tenth of November, 1674, at his house in Bunhill-fields; and was buried next his father in the chancel of St. Giles at Cripplegate. His funeral was very splendidly and numerously attended.

Upon his grave there is supposed to have been no memorial; but in our time a monument has been erected in Westminster-Abbey *To the Author of Paradise Lost*, by Mr. Benson, who has in the inscription bestowed more words upon himself than upon Milton.

When the inscription for the monument of Philips, in which he was said to be *soli Miltono secundus*, was exhibited to Dr. Sprat, then dean of Westminster, he refused to admit it; the name of Milton was, in his opinion, too detestable to be read on the wall of a building dedicated to devotion. Atterbury, who succeeded him, being author of the inscription, permitted its reception. "And such has been the change of publick opinion," said Dr. Gregory, from whom I heard this account, "that I have seen erected in the church a statue of that man, whose name I once knew considered as a pollution of its walls."

Milton has the reputation of having been in his youth eminently beautiful, so as to have been called the Lady of his college. His hair, which was of a light brown, parted at the fore-top, and hung down upon his shoulders, according to the picture which he

has given of Adam. He was, however, not of the heroick stature, but rather below the middle size, according to Mr. Richardson, who mentions him as having narrowly escaped from being *short and thick*. He was vigorous and active, and delighted in the exercise of the sword, in which he is related to have been eminently skilful. His weapon was, I believe, not the rapier, but the back-sword, of which he recommends the use in his book on Education.

His eyes are said never to have been bright; but. if he was a dexterous fencer, they must have been once quick.

His domestick habits, so far as they are known, were those of a severe student. He drank little strong drink of any kind, and fed without excess in quantity, and in his earlier years without delicacy of choice. In his youth he studied late at night; but afterwards changed his hours, and rested in bed from nine to four in the summer, and five in the winter, The course of his day was best known after he was blind. When he first rose, he heard a chapter in the Hebrew Bible, and then studied till twelve; then took some exercise for an hour; then dined, then played on the organ, and sang, or heard another sing; then studied to six; then entertained his visitors till eight; then supped, and, after a pipe of tobacco and a glass of water, went to bed.

So is his life described: but this even tenour appears attainable only in colleges. He that lives in the world will sometimes have the succession of his practice broken and confused. Visitors, of whom Milton is represented to have had great numbers,

will come and stay unseasonably; business, of which every man has some, must be done when others will do it.

When he did not care to rise early, he had something read to him by his bed-side; perhaps at this time his daughters were employed. He composed much in the morning, and dictated in the day, sitting obliquely in an elbow chair, with his leg thrown over the arm.

Fortune appears not to have had much of his care. In the civil wars he lent his personal estate to the Parliament; but when, after the contest was decided, he solicited repayment, he met not only with neglect, but *sharp rebuke*; and, having tired both himself and his friends, was given up to poverty and hopeless indignation, till he shewed how able he was to do greater service. He was then made Latin secretary, with two hundred pounds a year; and had a thousand pounds for his *Defence of the People*. His widow, who, after his death, retired to Namptwich in Cheshire, and died about 1729, is said to have reported that he lost two thousand pounds by entrusting it to a scrivener; and that, in the general depredation upon the Church, he had grasped an estate of about sixty pounds a year belonging to Westminster-Abbey, which, like other sharers of the plunder of rebellion, he was afterwards obliged to return. Two thousand pounds, which he had placed in the Excise-office, were also lost. There is yet no reason to believe that he was ever reduced to indigence. His wants, being few, were competently supplied. He sold his library before his death, and left his family

fifteen hundred pounds, on which his widow laid hold, and only gave one hundred to each of his daughters.

His literature was unquestionably great. He read all the languages which are considered either as learned or polite; Hebrew, with its two dialects, Greek, Latin, Italian, French, and Spanish. In Latin his skill was such as places him in the first rank of writers and criticks; and he appears to have cultivated Italian with uncommon diligence. The books in which his daughter, who used to read to him, represented him as most delighting, after Homer, which he could almost repeat, were Ovid's Metamorphoses and Euripides. His Euripides is, by Mr. Cradock's kindness, now in my hands: the margin is sometimes noted; but I have found nothing remarkable.

Of the English poets he set most value upon Spenser, Shakspeare, and Cowley. Spenser was apparently his favourite; Shakspeare he may easily be supposed to like, with every other skilful reader; but I should not have expected that Cowley, whose ideas of excellence were so different from his own, would have had much of his approbation. His character of Dryden, who sometimes visited him, was, that he was a good rhymist, but no poet.

His theological opinions are said to have been first Calvinistical; and afterwards, perhaps when he began to hate the Presbyterians, to have tended towards Arminianism. In the mixed questions of theology and government, he never thinks that he can recede far enough from popery, or prelacy; but what Baudius says of Erasmus seems applicable to him, *magis habuit quod fugeret, quam quod sequeretur.* He

had determined rather what to condemn, than what to approve. He has not associated himself with any denomination of Protestants; we know rather what he was not, than what he was. He was not of the Church of Rome; he was not of the Church of England.

To be of no Church is dangerous. Religion, of which the rewards are distant, and which is animated only by Faith and Hope, will glide by degrees out of the mind, unless it be invigorated and reimpressed by external ordinances, by stated calls to worship, and the salutary influence of example. Milton, who appears to have had full conviction of the truth of Christianity, and to have regarded the Holy Scriptures with the profoundest veneration, to have been untainted by any heretical peculiarity of opinion, and to have lived in a confirmed belief of the immediate and occasional agency of Providence, yet grew old without any visible worship. In the distribution of his hours, there was no hour of prayer, either solitary or with his household; omitting publick prayers, he omitted all.

Of this omission the reason has been sought upon a supposition which ought never to be made, that men live with their own approbation, and justify their conduct to themselves. Prayer certainly was not thought superfluous by him, who represents our first parents as praying acceptably in the state of innocence, and efficaciously after their fall. That he lived without prayer can hardly be affirmed; his studies and meditations were an habitual prayer. The neglect of it in his family was probably a fault

for which he condemned himself, and which he intended to correct, but that death, as too often happens, intercepted his reformation.

His political notions were those of an acrimonious and surly republican, for which it is not known that he gave any better reason than that *a popular government was the most frugal; for the trappings of a monarchy would set up an ordinary commonwealth.* It is surely very shallow policy that supposes money to be the chief good: and even this, without considering that the support and expence of a Court is, for the most part, only a particular kind of traffick, by which money is circulated, without any national impoverishment.

Milton's republicanism was, I am afraid, founded in an envious hatred of greatness, and a sullen desire of independence; in petulance impatient of controul, and pride disdainful of superiority. He hated monarchs in the State, and prelates in the Church; for he hated all whom he was required to obey. It is to be suspected, that his predominant desire was to destroy rather than establish, and that he felt not so much the love of liberty as repugnance to authority.

It has been observed, that they who most loudly clamour for liberty do not most liberally grant it. What we know of Milton's character, in domestick relations, is, that he was severe and arbitrary. His family consisted of women; and there appears in his books something like a Turkish contempt of females, as subordinate and inferior beings. That his own daughters might not break the ranks, he suffered them to be depressed by a mean and penu-

rious education. He thought women made only for obedience, and man only for rebellion.

Of his family some account may be expected. His sister, first married to Mr. Philips, afterwards married Mr. Agar, a friend of her first husband, who succeeded him in the Crown-office. She had, by her first husband, Edward and John, the two nephews whom Milton educated; and, by her second, two daughters.

His brother, Sir Christopher, had two daughters, Mary and Catharine*; and a son Thomas, who succeeded Agar in the Crown-office, and left a daughter living in 1749 in Grosvenor-street.

Milton had children only by his first wife; Anne, Mary, and Deborah. Anne, though deformed, married a master-builder, and died of her first child Mary died single. Deborah married Abraham Clark, a weaver in Spital-fields, and lived seventy-six years, to August 1727. This is the daughter of whom publick mention has been made. She could repeat the first lines of Homer, the Metamorphoses, and some of Euripides, by having often read them. Yet here incredulity is ready to make a stand. Many repetitions are necessary to fix in the memory lines

* Both these persons were living at Holloway about the year 1734, and at that time possessed such a degree of health and strength, as enabled them on Sundays and Prayer-days to walk a mile up a steep hill to Highgate chapel. One of them was ninety-two at the time of her death. Their parentage was known to few, and their names were corrupted into Melton. By the Crown-office mentioned in the two last paragraphs, we are to understand the Crown-office of the Court of Chancery. H.

not understood; and why should Milton wish or want to hear them so often? These lines were at the beginning of the poems. Of a book written in a language not understood, the beginning raises no more attention than the end; and as those that understand it know commonly the beginning best, its rehearsal will seldom be necessary. It is not likely that Milton required any passage to be so much repeated as that his daughter could learn it; nor likely that he desired the initial lines to be read at all; nor that the daughter, weary of the drudgery of pronouncing unideal sounds, would voluntarily commit them to memory.

To this gentlewoman Addison made a present, and promised some establishment, but died soon after. Queen Caroline sent her fifty guineas. She had seven sons and three daughters; but none of them had any children, except her son Caleb and her daughter Elizabeth. Caleb went to Fort St. George in the East Indies, and had two sons, of whom nothing is now known. Elizabeth married Thomas Foster, a weaver in Spital-fields; and had seven children, who all died. She kept a petty grocer's or chandler's shop, first at Holloway, and afterwards in Cock-lane, near Shoreditch Church. She knew little of her grandfather, and that little was not good. She told of his harshness to his daughters, and his refusal to have them taught to write; and, in opposition to other accounts, represented him as delicate, though temperate, in his diet.

In 1750, April 5, *Comus* was played for her benefit. She had so little acquaintance with diversion or gaiety, that she did not know what was

intended when a benefit was offered her. The profits of the night were only one hundred and thirty pounds, though Dr. Newton brought a large contribution; and twenty pounds were given by Tonson, a man who is to be praised as often as he is named. Of this sum one hundred pounds were placed in the stocks, after some debate between her and her husband in whose name it should be entered; and the rest augmented their little stock, with which they removed to Islington. This was the greatest benefaction that *Paradise Lost* ever procured the author's descendants; and to this he, who has now attempted to relate his Life, had the honour of contributing a Prologue.*

* Printed in the first volume of this Collection. N.

In the examination of Milton's poetical works, I shall pay so much regard to time as to begin with his juvenile productions. For his early pieces he seems to have had a degree of fondness not very laudable; what he has once written he resolves to preserve, and gives to the publick an unfinished poem, which he broke off because he was *nothing satisfied with what he had done*, supposing his readers less nice than himself. These preludes to his future labours are in Italian, Latin, and English. Of the Italian I cannot pretend to speak as a critick; but I have heard them commended by a man well qualified to decide their merit. The Latin pieces are lusciously elegant; but the delight which they afford is rather by the exquisite imitation of the ancient writers, by the purity of the diction, and the harmony of the numbers, than by any power of invention, or vigour of sentiment. They are not all of equal value; the elegies excel the odes; and some of the exercises on Gunpowder Treason might have been spared.

The English poems, though they make no promises of "Paradise Lost*," have this evidence of genius, that they have a cast original and unborrowed. But their peculiarity is not excellence; if they differ from the verses of others, they differ for the worse; for they are too often distinguished by repulsive harshness; the combinations of words are new,

* With the exception of Comus, in which, Dr. J. afterwards says, may very plainly be discovered the dawn or twilight of Paradise Lost. C.

but they are not pleasing; the rhymes and epithets seem to be laboriously sought, and violently applied.

That in the early part of his life he wrote with much care appears from his manuscripts, happily preserved at Cambridge, in which many of his smaller works are found as they were first written, with the subsequent corrections. Such reliques shew how excellence is acquired; what we hope ever to do with ease, we must learn first to do with diligence.

Those who admire the beauties of this great poet sometimes force their own judgment into false approbation of his little pieces, and prevail upon themselves to think that admirable which is only singular. All that short compositions can commonly attain is neatness and elegance. Milton never learned the art of doing little things with grace; he overlooked the milder excellence of suavity and softness: he was a *Lion* that had no skill *in dandling the Kid.*

One of the poems on which much praise has been bestowed is *Lycidas;* of which the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers unpleasing. What beauty there is we must therefore seek in the sentiments and images. It is not to be considered as the effusion of real passion; for passion runs not after remote allusions and obscure opinions. Passion plucks no berries from the myrtle and ivy, nor calls upon Arethuse and Mincius, nor tells of rough *satyrs* and *fauns with cloven heel.* Where there is leisure for fiction, there is little grief.

In this poem there is no nature, for there is no truth; there is no art, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral: easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting; whatever images it can supply

are long ago exhausted; and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind. When Cowley tells of Hervey, that they studied together, it is easy to suppose how much he must miss the companion of his labours, and the partner of his discoveries; but what image of tenderness can be excited by these lines?

> We drove a field, and both together heard,
> What time the grey fly winds her sultry horn,
> Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night.

We know that they never drove a field, and that they had no flocks to batten; and though it be allowed that the representation may be allegorical, the true meaning is so uncertain and remote, that it is never sought, because it cannot be known when it is found.

Among the flocks, and copses, and flowers, appear the Heathen deities; Jove and Phœbus, Neptune and Æolus, with a long train of mythological imagery, such as a college easily supplies. Nothing can less display knowledge, or less exercise invention, than to tell how a shepherd has lost his companion, and must now feed his flocks alone, without any judge of his skill in piping; and how one god asks another god what is become of Lycidas, and how neither god can tell. He who thus grieves will excite no sympathy; he who thus praises will confer no honour.

This poem has yet a grosser fault. With these trifling fictions are mingled the most awful and sacred truths, such as ought never to be polluted with such irreverend combinations. The shepherd likewise is now a feeder of sheep, and afterwards an ecclesiastical pastor, a superintendant of a Christian flock. Such equivocations are always unskilful; but

here they are indecent, and at least approach to impiety, of which, however, I believe the writer not to have been conscious.

Such is the power of reputation justly acquired, that its blaze drives away the eye from nice examination. Surely no man could have fancied that he read *Lycidas* with pleasure, had he not known the author.

Of the two pieces, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, I believe, opinion is uniform; every man that reads them, reads them with pleasure. The author's design is not, what Theobald has remarked, merely to shew how objects derive their colours from the mind, by representing the operation of the same things upon the gay and the melancholy temper, or upon the same man as he is differently disposed; but rather how, among the successive variety of appearances, every disposition of mind takes hold on those by which it may be gratified.

The *cheerful* man hears the lark in the morning; the *pensive* man hears the nightingale in the evening. The *cheerful* man sees the cock strut, and hears the horn and hounds echo in the wood; then walks, *not unseen*, to observe the glory of the rising sun, or listen to the singing milk-maid, and view the labours of the plowman and the mower: then casts his eyes about him over scenes of smiling plenty, and looks up to the distant tower, the residence of some fair inhabitant; thus he pursues rural gaiety through a day of labour or of play, and delights himself at night with the fanciful narratives of superstitious ignorance.

The *pensive* man, at one time, walks *unseen* to muse at midnight; and at another hears the sullen curfew. If the weather drives him home, he sits in

a room lighted only by *glowing embers;* or by a lonely lamp outwatches the North Star, to discover the habitation of separate souls, and varies the shades of meditation, by contemplating the magnificent or pathetick scenes of tragick or epick poetry. When the morning comes, a morning gloomy with rain and wind, he walks into the dark trackless woods*, falls asleep by some murmuring water, and with melancholy enthusiasm expects some dream of prognostication, or some musick played by aërial performers.

Both Mirth and Melancholy are solitary, silent inhabitants of the breast, that neither receive nor transmit communication; no mention is therefore made of a philosophical friend, or a pleasant companion. The seriousness does not arise from any participation of calamity, nor the gaiety from the pleasures of the bottle.

The man of *cheerfulness*, having exhausted the country, tries what *towered cities* will afford, and mingles with scenes of splendour, gay assemblies, and nuptial festivities; but he mingles a mere spectator, as, when the learned comedies of Jonson, or the wild dramas of Shakspeare, are exhibited, he attends the theatre.

The *pensive* man never loses himself in crowds, but walks the cloister, or frequents the cathedral. Milton probably had not yet forsaken the church.

Both his characters delight in musick; but he

* Here, as Warton justly observes, "Johnson has confounded two descriptions!" The melancholy man does not go out while it rains, but waits till

——The sun begins to fling
His flaring beams. J. B.

seems to think that cheerful notes would have obtained from Pluto a complete dismission of Eurydice, of whom solemn sounds only procured a conditional release.

For the old age of Cheerfulness he makes no provision; but Melancholy he conducts with great dignity to the close of life. His Cheerfulness is without levity, and his Pensiveness without asperity.

Through these two poems the images are properly selected and nicely distinguished; but the colours of the diction seem not sufficiently discriminated. I know not whether the characters are kept sufficiently apart. No mirth can, indeed, be found in his melancholy; but I am afraid that I always meet some melancholy in his mirth. They are two noble efforts of imagination*.

The greatest of his juvenile performances is the *Mask of Comus*, in which may very plainly be discovered the dawn or twilight of "Paradise Lost." Milton appears to have formed very early that system of diction, and mode of verse, which his maturer judgment approved, and from which he never endeavoured nor desired to deviate.

Nor does *Comus* afford only a specimen of his language; it exhibits likewise his power of descrip-

* Mr. Warton intimates (and there can be little doubt of the truth of his conjecture) that Milton borrowed many of the images in these two fine poems from "Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy," a book published in 1621, and at sundry times since, abounding in learning, curious information, and pleasantry. Mr. Warton says, that Milton appears to have been an attentive reader thereof; and to this assertion I add, of my own knowledge, that it was a book that Dr. Johnson frequently resorted to, as many others have done, for amusement after the fatigue of study. H.

tion and his vigour of sentiment, employed in the praise and defence of virtue. A work more truly poetical is rarely found; allusions, images, and descriptive epithets, embellish almost every period with lavish decoration. As a series of lines therefore, it may be considered as worthy of all the admiration with which the votaries have received it.

As a drama it is deficient. The action is not probable. A Masque, in those parts where supernatural intervention is admitted, must indeed be given up to all the freaks of imagination, but, so far as the action is merely human, it ought to be reasonable, which can hardly be said of the conduct of the two brothers; who, when their sister sinks with fatigue in a pathless wilderness, wander both away together in search of berries too far to find their way back, and leave a helpless Lady to all the sadness and danger of solitude. This, however, is a defect overbalanced by its convenience.

What deserves more reprehension is, that the prologue spoken in the wild wood by the attendant Spirit is addressed to the audience; a mode of communication so contrary to the nature of dramatick representation, that no precedents can support it.

The discourse of the Spirit is too long; an objection that may be made to almost all the following speeches; they have not the spriteliness of a dialogue animated by reciprocal contention, but seem rather declamations deliberately composed, and formally repeated, on a moral question. The auditor therefore listens as to a lecture, without passion, without anxiety.

The song of Comus has airiness and jollity; but,

what may recommend Milton's morals as well as his poetry, the invitations to pleasure are so general, that they excite no distinct images of corrupt enjoyment, and take no dangerous hold on the fancy.

The following soliloquies of Comus and the Lady are elegant, but tedious. The song must owe much to the voice if it ever can delight. At last the Brothers enter with too much tranquillity; and, when they have feared lest their sister should be in danger, and hoped that she is not in danger, the Elder makes a speech in praise of chastity, and the Younger finds how fine it is to be a philosopher.

Then descends the Spirit in form of a shepherd; and the Brother, instead of being in haste to ask his help, praises his singing, and enquires his business in that place. It is remarkable, that at this interview the Brother is taken with a short fit of rhyming. The Spirit relates that the Lady is in the power of Comus; the Brother moralizes again; and the Spirit makes a long narration, of no use because it is false, and therefore unsuitable to a good Being.

In all these parts the language is poetical, and the sentiments are generous; but there is something wanting to allure attention.

The dispute between the Lady and Comus is the most animated and affecting scene of the drama, and wants nothing but a brisker reciprocation of objections and replies to invite attention and detain it.

The songs are vigorous and full of imagery; but they are harsh in their diction, and not very musical in their numbers.

Throughout the whole the figures are too bold, and the language too luxuriant, for dialogue. It is

a drama in the epick style, inelegantly splendid, and tediously instructive.

The *Sonnets* were written in different parts of Milton's life, upon different occasions. They deserve not any particular criticism; for of the best it can only be said, that they are not bad; and perhaps only the eighth and the twenty-first are truly entitled to this slender commendation. The fabrick of a sonnet, however adapted to the Italian language, has never succeeded in ours, which having greater variety of termination, requires the rhymes to be often changed.

Those little pieces may be dispatched without much anxiety; a greater work calls for greater care. I am now to examine *Paradise Lost*; a poem, which, considered with respect to design, may claim the first place, and with respect to performance the second, among the productions of the human mind.

By the general consent of criticks the first praise of genius is due to the writer of an epick poem, as it requires an assemblage of all the powers which are singly sufficient for other compositions. Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reason. Epick poetry undertakes to teach the most important truths by the most pleasing precepts, and therefore relates some great event in the most affecting manner. History must supply the writer with the rudiments of narration, which he must improve and exalt by a nobler art, must animate by dramatick energy, and diversify by retrospection and anticipation; morality must teach him the exact bounds, and different shades, of vice and virtue; from policy, and the practice of life, he has to learn the discriminations of character, and the tendency of the

passions, either single or combined; and physiology must supply him with illustrations and images. To put these materials to poetical use, is required an imagination capable of painting nature, and realizing fiction. Nor is he yet a poet till he has attained the whole extension of his language, distinguished all the delicacies of phrase, and all the colours of words, and learned to adjust their different sounds to all the varieties of metrical modulation.

Bossu is of opinion, that the poet's first work is to find a *moral*, which his fable is afterwards to illustrate and establish. This seems to have been the process only of Milton; the moral of other poems is incidental and consequent; in Milton's only it is essential and intrinsick. His purpose was the most useful and the most arduous; *to vindicate the ways of God to man;* to shew the reasonableness of religion, and the necessity of obedience to the Divine Law.

To convey this moral, there must be a *fable*, a narration artfully constructed, so as to excite curiosity, and surprise expectation. In this part of his work, Milton must be confessed to have equalled every other poet. He has involved in his account of the Fall of Man the events which preceded, and those that were to follow it; he has interwoven the whole system of theology with such propriety, that every part appears to be necessary; and scarcely any recital is wished shorter for the sake of quickening the progress of the main action.

The subject of an epick poem is naturally an event of great importance. That of Milton is not the destruction of a city, the conduct of a colony, or the foundation of an empire. His subject is the fate of

worlds, the revolutions of Heaven and of Earth; rebellion, against the supreme King, raised by the highest order of created beings; the overthrow of their host, and the punishment of their crime; the creation of a new race of reasonable creatures; their original happiness and innocence, their forfeiture of immortality, and their restoration to hope and peace.

Great events can be hastened or retarded only by persons of elevated dignity. Before the greatness displayed in Milton's poem, all other greatness shrinks away. The weakest of his agents are the highest and noblest of human beings, the original parents of mankind; with whose actions the elements consented; on whose rectitude, or deviation of will, depended the state of terrestrial nature, and the condition of all the future inhabitants of the globe.

Of the other agents in the poem, the chief are such as it is irreverence to name on slight occasions. The rest were lower powers;

> ——of which the least could wield
> Those elements, and arm him with the force
> Of all their regions;

powers, which only the controul of Omnipotence restrains from laying creation waste, and filling the vast expanse of space with ruin and confusion. To display the motives and actions of beings thus superior, so far as human reason can examine them, or human imagination represent them, is the task which this mighty poet has undertaken and performed.

In the examination of epick poems much speculation is commonly employed upon the *characters*. The characters in the "Paradise Lost," which admit of examination, are those of angels and of man; of

angels good and evil; of man in his innocent and sinful state.

Among the angels, the virtue of Raphael is mild and placid, of easy condescension and free communication; that of Michael is regal and lofty, and, as may seem, attentive to the dignity of his own nature. Abdiel and Gabriel appear occasionally, and act as every incident requires; the solitary fidelity of Abdiel is very amiably painted.

Of the evil angels the characters are more diversified. To Satan, as Addison observes, such sentiments are given as suit *the most exalted and most depraved being*. Milton has been censured by Clarke*, for the impiety which sometimes breaks from Satan's mouth; for there are thoughts, as he justly remarks, which no observation of character can justify, because no good man would willingly permit them to pass, however transiently, through his own mind. To make Satan speak as a rebel, without any such expressions as might taint the reader's imagination, was indeed one of the great difficulties in Milton's undertaking; and I cannot but think that he has extricated himself with great happiness. There is in Satan's speeches little that can give pain to a pious ear. The language of rebellion cannot be the same with that of obedience. The malignity of Satan foams in haughtiness and obstinacy; but his expressions are commonly general, and no otherwise offensive than as they are wicked.

The other chiefs of the celestial rebellion are very judiciously discriminated in the first and second

* Author of the "Essay on Study." Dr. J.

books; and the ferocious character of Moloch appears, both in the battle and the council, with exact consistency.

To Adam and to Eve are given, during their innocence, such sentiments as innocence can generate and utter. Their love is pure benevolence and mutual veneration; their repasts are without luxury, and their diligence without toil. Their addresses to their Maker have little more than the voice of admiration and gratitude. Fruition left them nothing to ask; and Innocence left them nothing to fear.

But with guilt enter distrust and discord, mutual accusation, and stubborn self-defence; they regard each other with alienated minds, and dread their Creator as the avenger of their transgression. At last they seek shelter in his mercy, soften to repentance, and melt in supplication. Both before and after the Fall, the superiority of Adam is diligently sustained.

Of the *probable* and the *marvellous*, two parts of a vulgar epick poem, which immerge the critick in deep consideration, the "Paradise Lost" requires little to be said. It contains the history of a miracle, of Creation and Redemption; it displays the power and the mercy of the Supreme Being; the probable therefore is marvellous, and the marvellous is probable. The substance of the narrative is truth; and, as truth allows no choice, it is, like necessity, superior to rule. To the accidental or adventitious parts, as to every thing human, some slight exceptions may be made; but the main fabrick is immovably supported.

It is justly remarked by Addison, that this poem has, by the nature of its subject, the advantage above all others, that it is universally and perpetually interesting. All mankind will, through all ages, bear the same relation to Adam and to Eve, and must partake of that good and evil which extend to themselves.

Of the *machinery*, so called from Θεὸς ἀπὸ μηχανῆς, by which is meant the occasional interposition of supernatural power, another fertile topick of critical remarks, here is no room to speak, because every thing is done under the immediate and visible direction of Heaven; but the rule is so far observed, that no part of the action could have been accomplished by any other means.

Of *episodes*, I think there are only two, contained in Raphael's relation of the war in Heaven, and Michael's prophetick account of the changes to happen in this world. Both are closely connected with the great action; one was necessary to Adam as a warning, the other as a consolation.

To the completeness or *integrity* of the design nothing can be objected; it has distinctly and clearly what Aristotle requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end. There is perhaps no poem, of the same length, from which so little can be taken without apparent mutilation. Here are no funeral games, nor is there any long description of a shield. The short digressions at the beginning of the third, seventh, and ninth books might doubtless be spared; but superfluities so beautiful who would take away? or who does not wish that the author of the *Iliad* had gratified succeeding ages with a little knowledge of

himself? Perhaps no passages are more frequently or more attentively read than those extrinsick paragraphs; and, since the end of poetry is pleasure, that cannot be unpoetical with which all are pleased.

The questions, whether the action of the poem be strictly *one*, whether the poem can be properly termed *heroick*, and who is the hero, are raised by such readers as draw their principles of judgment rather from books than from reason. Milton, though he intituled *Paradise Lost*, only a *poem*, yet calls it himself *heroick song*. Dryden petulantly and indecently denies the heroism of Adam, because he was overcome; but there is no reason why the hero should not be unfortunate, except established practice, since success and virtue do not go necessarily together. Cato is the hero of Lucan; but Lucan's authority will not be suffered by Quintilian to decide. However, if success be necessary, Adam's deceiver was at last crushed; Adam was restored to his Maker's favour, and therefore may securely resume his human rank.

After the scheme and fabrick of the poem, must be considered its component parts, the sentiments and the diction.

The *sentiments*, as expressive of manners, or appropriated to characters, are, for the greater part, unexceptionably just.

Splendid passages, containing lessons of morality, or precepts of prudence, occur seldom. Such is the original formation of this poem, that, as it admits no human manners till the Fall, it can give little assistance to human conduct. Its end is to raise the thoughts above sublunary cares or pleasures. Yet the

praise of that fortitude, with which Abdiel maintained his singularity of virtue against the scorn of multitudes, may be accommodated to all times; and Raphael's reproof of Adam's curiosity after the planetary motions, with the answer returned by Adam, may be confidently opposed to any rule of life which any poet has delivered.

The thoughts which are occasionally called forth in the progress, are such as could only be produced by an imagination in the highest degree fervid and active, to which materials were supplied by incessant study and unlimited curiosity. The heat of Milton's mind may be said to sublimate his learning, to throw off into his work the spirit of science, unmingled with its grosser parts.

He had considered creation in its whole extent, and his descriptions are therefore learned. He had accustomed his imagination to unrestrained indulgence, and his conceptions therefore were extensive. The characteristick quality of his poem is sublimity. He sometimes descends to the elegant, but his element is the great. He can occasionally invest himself with grace; but his natural port is gigantick loftiness*. He can please when pleasure is required; but it is his peculiar power to astonish.

He seems to have been well acquainted with his own genius, and to know what it was that Nature had bestowed upon him more bountifully than upon others; the power of displaying the vast, illuminating the splendid, enforcing the awful, darkening the gloomy, and aggravating the dreadful; he there-

* Algarotti terms it *gigantesca sublimità Miltoniana.* Dr. J.

fore chose a subject on which too much could not be said, on which he might tire his fancy without the censure of extravagance.

The appearances of nature, and the occurrences of life, did not satiate his appetite of greatness. To paint things as they are, requires a minute attention, and employs the memory rather than the fancy. Milton's delight was to sport in the wide regions of possibility; reality was a scene too narrow for his mind. He sent his faculties out upon discovery, into worlds where only imagination can travel, and delighted to form new modes of existence, and furnish sentiment and action to superior beings, to trace the counsels of Hell, or accompany the choirs of Heaven.

But he could not be always in other worlds; he must sometimes revisit earth, and tell of things visible and known. When he cannot raise wonder by the sublimity of his mind, he gives delight by its fertility.

Whatever be his subject, he never fails to fill the imagination. But his images and descriptions of the scenes or operations of Nature do not seem to be always copied from original form, nor to have the freshness, raciness, and energy, of immediate observation. He saw Nature, as Dryden expresses it, *through the spectacles of books;* and on most occasions calls learning to his assistance. The garden of Eden brings to his mind the vale of *Enna*, where Proserpine was gathering flowers. Satan makes his way through fighting elements, like *Argo* between the *Cyanean* rocks; or *Ulysses* between the two *Sicilian* whirlpools, when he shunned *Charybdis* on the *lar-*

board. The mythological allusions have been justly censured, as not being always used with notice of their vanity; but they contribute variety to the narration, and produce an alternate exercise of the memory and the fancy.

His similies are less numerous, and more various, than those of his predecessors. But he does not confine himself within the limits of rigorous comparison: his great excellence is amplitude; and he expands the adventitious image beyond the dimensions which the occasion required. Thus comparing the shield of Satan to the orb of the Moon, he crouds the imagination with the discovery of the telescope, and all the wonders which the telescope discovers.

Of his moral sentiments it is hardly praise to affirm that they excel those of all other poets; for this superiority he was indebted to his acquaintance with the sacred writings. The antient epick poets, wanting the light of Revelation, were very unskilful teachers of virtue; their principal characters may be great, but they are not amiable. The reader may rise from their works with a greater degree of active or passive fortitude, and sometimes of prudence; but he will be able to carry away few precepts of justice, and none of mercy.

From the Italian writers it appears, that the advantages of even Christian knowledge may be possessed in vain. Ariosto's pravity is generally known; and, though the *Deliverance of Jerusalem* may be considered as a sacred subject, the poet has been very sparing of moral instruction.

In Milton every line breathes sanctity of thought,

and purity of manners, except when the train of the narration requires the introduction of the rebellious spirits; and even they are compelled to acknowledge their subjection to God, in such a manner as excites reverence and confirms piety.

Of human beings there are but two; but those two are the parents of mankind, venerable before their fall for dignity and innocence, and amiable after it for repentance and submission. In the first state their affection is tender without weakness, and their piety sublime without presumption. When they have sinned, they shew how discord begins in mutual frailty, and how it ought to cease in mutual forbearance; how confidence of the divine favour is forfeited by sin, and how hope of pardon may be obtained by penitence and prayer. A state of innocence we can only conceive, if indeed, in our present misery, it be possible to conceive it; but the sentiments and worship proper to a fallen and offending being, we have all to learn, as we have all to practise.

The poet, whatever be done, is always great. Our progenitors in their first state conversed with angels; even when folly and sin had degraded them, they had not in their humiliation *the port of mean suitors;* and they rise again to reverential regard, when we find that their prayers were heard.

As human passions did not enter the world before the Fall, there is in the "Paradise Lost" little opportunity for the pathetick; but what little there is has not been lost. That passion which is peculiar to rational nature, the anguish arising from the consciousness of transgression, and the horrors attending the sense of

the Divine displeasure, are very justly described and forcibly impressed. But the passions are moved only on one occasion; sublimity is the general and prevailing quality of this poem; sublimity variously modified, sometimes descriptive, sometimes argumentative.

The defects and faults of "Paradise Lost," for faults and defects every work of man must have, it is the business of impartial criticism to discover. As, in displaying the excellence of Milton, I have not made long quotations, because of selecting beauties there had been no end, I shall in the same general manner mention that which seems to deserve censure; for what Englishman can take delight in transcribing passages, which, if they lessen the reputation of Milton, diminish in some degree the honour of our country?

The generality of my scheme does not admit the frequent notice of verbal inaccuracies; which Bentley, perhaps better skilled in grammar than in poetry, has often found, though he sometimes made them, and which he imputed to the obtrusions of a reviser, whom the author's blindness obliged him to employ; a supposition rash and groundless, if he thought it true; and vile and pernicious, if, as is said, he in private allowed it to be false.

The plan of "Paradise Lost" has this inconvenience, that it comprises neither human actions nor human manners*. The man and woman who act and suffer are in a state which no other man or woman can ever know. The reader finds no transaction in which he can be engaged; beholds no condition in which he

* But, says Dr. Warton, it has throughout a reference to human life and actions. C.

can by any effort of imagination place himself; he has, therefore, little natural curiosity or sympathy.

We all, indeed, feel the effect of Adam's disobedience; we all sin like Adam, and like him must all bewail our offences; we have restless and insidious enemies in the fallen angels; and in the blessed spirits we have guardians and friends; in the Redemption of mankind we hope to be included; and in the description of Heaven and Hell we are surely interested, as we are all to reside hereafter either in the regions of horrour or of bliss.

But these truths are too important to be new; they have been taught to our infancy; they have mingled with our solitary thoughts and familiar conversations, and are habitually interwoven with the whole texture of life. Being therefore not new, they raise no unaccustomed emotion in the mind; what we knew before, we cannot learn; what is not unexpected, cannot surprise.

Of the ideas suggested by these awful scenes, from some we recede with reverence, except when stated hours require their association; and from others we shrink with horrour, or admit them only as salutary inflictions, as counterpoises to our interests and passions. Such images rather obstruct the career of fancy than incite it.

Pleasure and terrour are indeed the genuine sources of poetry; but poetical pleasure must be such as human imagination can at least conceive; and poetical terrour such as human strength and fortitude may combat. The good and evil of Eternity are too ponderous for the wings of wit; the mind sinks

under them in passive helplessness, content with calm belief and humble adoration.

Known truths, however, may take a different appearance, and be conveyed to the mind by a new train of intermediate images. This Milton has undertaken, and performed with pregnancy and vigour of mind peculiar to himself. Whoever considers the few radical positions which the Scriptures afforded him, will wonder by what energetic operation he expanded them to such extent, and ramified them to so much variety, restrained as he was by religious reverence from licentiousness of fiction.

Here is a full display of the united force of study and genius; of a great accumulation of materials, with judgment to digest, and fancy to combine them: Milton was able to select from nature, or from story, from ancient fable, or from modern science, whatever could illustrate or adorn his thoughts. An accumulation of knowledge impregnated his mind, fermented by study, and exalted by imagination.

It has been therefore said, without an indecent hyperbole, by one of his encomiasts, that in reading "Paradise Lost" we read a book of universal knowledge.

But original deficience cannot be supplied. The want of human interest is always felt. "Paradise Lost" is one of the books which the reader admires and lays down, and forgets to take up again. None ever wished it longer than it is. Its perusal is a duty rather than a pleasure. We read Milton for instruction, retire harassed and overburdened, and look elsewhere for recreation; we desert our master, and seek for companions.

Another inconvenience of Milton's design is, that it requires the description of what cannot be described, the agency of spirits. He saw that immateriality supplied no images, and that he could not shew angels acting but by instruments of action; he therefore invested them with form and matter. This, being necessary, was therefore defensible: and he should have secured the consistency of his system, by keeping immateriality out of sight, and enticing his reader to drop it from his thoughts. But he has unhappily perplexed his poetry with his philosophy. His infernal and celestial powers are sometimes pure spirit, and sometimes animated body. When Satan walks with his lance upon the *burning marl*, he has a body; when, in his passage between Hell and the new world, he is in danger of sinking in the vacuity, and is supported by a gust of rising vapours, he has a body; when he animates the toad, he seems to be mere spirit, that can penetrate matter at pleasure; when he starts *up in his own shape*, he has at least a determined form; and, when he is brought before Gabriel, he has *a spear and a shield*, which he had the power of hiding in the toad, though the arms of the contending angels are evidently material.

The vulgar inhabitants of Pandæmonium, being *incorporeal spirits*, are *at large, though without number*, in a limited space: yet in the battle, when they were overwhelmed by mountains, their armour hurt them, *crushed in upon their substance, now grown gross by sinning*. This likewise happened to the uncorrupted angels, who were overthrown the *sooner for their arms, for unarmed they might easily as spirits have evaded by contraction or remove*. Even as

spirits they are hardly spiritual; for *contraction* and *remove* are images of matter; but if they could have escaped without their armour, they might have escaped from it, and left only the empty cover to be battered. Uriel, when he rides on a sunbeam, is material; Satan is material when he is afraid of the prowess of Adam.

The confusion of spirit and matter, which pervades the whole narration of the war of Heaven, fills it with incongruity; and the book in which it is related is, I believe, the favourite of children, and gradually neglected as knowledge is increased.

After the operation of immaterial agents which cannot be explained, may be considered that of allegorical persons which have no real existence. To exalt causes into agents, to invest abstract ideas with form, and animate them with activity, has always been the right of poetry. But such airy beings are, for the most part, suffered only to do their natural office, and retire. Thus Fame tells a tale, and Victory hovers over a general, or perches on a standard; but Fame and Victory can do no more. To give them any real employment, or ascribe to them any material agency, is to make them allegorical no longer, but to shock the mind by ascribing effects to non-entity. In the *Prometheus* of Æschylus, we see *Violence* and *Strength*, and in the *Alcestis* of Euripides, we see *Death*, brought upon the stage, all as active persons of the drama; but no precedents can justify absurdity.

Milton's allegory of Sin and Death is undoubtedly faulty. Sin is indeed the mother of Death, and may be allowed to be the portress of Hell; but when

they stop the journey of Satan, a journey described as real, and when Death offers him battle, the allegory is broken. That sin and death should have shewn the way to Hell, might have been allowed; but they cannot facilitate the passage by building a bridge, because the difficulty of Satan's passage is described as real and sensible, and the bridge ought to be only figurative. The Hell assigned to the rebellious spirits is described as not less local than the residence of man. It is placed in some distant part of space, separated from the regions of harmony and order by a chaotic waste and an unoccupied vacuity; but *Sin* and *Death* worked up a *mole* of *aggravated soil*, cemented with *asphaltus*; a work too bulky for ideal architects.

This unskilful allegory appears to me one of the greatest faults of the poem; and to this there was no temptation but the author's opinion of its beauty.

To the conduct of the narrative some objections may be made. Satan is with great expectation brought before Gabriel in Paradise, and is suffered to go away unmolested. The Creation of man is represented as the consequence of the vacuity left in Heaven by the expulsion of the rebels; yet Satan mentions it as a report *rife in Heaven* before his departure.

To find sentiments for the state of innocence was very difficult; and something of anticipation perhaps is now and then discovered. Adam's discourse of dreams seems not to be the speculation of a new-created being. I know not whether his answer to the angel's reproof for curiosity does not want something of propriety; it is the speech of a man ac-

quainted with many other men. Some philosophical notions, especially when the philosophy is false, might have been better omitted. The angel, in a comparison, speaks of *timorous deer*, before deer were yet timorous, and before Adam could understand the comparison.

Dryden remarks, that Milton has some flats among his elevations. This is only to say, that all the parts are not equal. In every work, one part must be for the sake of others; a palace must have passages; a poem must have transitions. It is no more to be required that wit should always be blazing, than that the sun should always stand at noon. In a great work there is a vicissitude of luminous and opaque parts, as there is in the world a succession of day and night. Milton, when he has expatiated in the sky, may be allowed sometimes to revisit earth; for what other author ever soared so high, or sustained his flight so long?

Milton, being well versed in the Italian poets, appears to have borrowed often from them; and, as every man catches something from his companions, his desire of imitating Ariosto's levity has disgraced his work with the *Paradise of Fools;* a fiction not in itself ill-imagined, but too ludicrous for its place.

His play on words, in which he delights too often; his equivocations, which Bentley endeavours to defend by the example of the ancients; his unnecessary and ungraceful use of terms of art; it is not necessary to mention, because they are easily remarked, and generally censured; and at last bear so little proportion to the whole, that they scarcely deserve the attention of a critick.

Such are the faults of that wonderful performance "Paradise Lost;" which he who can put in balance with its beauties must be considered not as nice but as dull, as less to be censured for want of candour, than pitied for want of sensibility.

Of *Paradise Regained*, the general judgment seems now to be right, that it is in many parts elegant, and every where instructive. It was not to be supposed that the writer of "Paradise Lost" could ever write without great effusions of fancy, and exalted precepts of wisdom. The basis of "Paradise Regained" is narrow; a dialogue without action can never please like an union of the narrative and dramatick powers. Had this poem been written not by Milton, but by some imitator, it would have claimed and received universal praise.

If "Paradise Regained" has been too much depreciated, *Sampson Agonistes* has in requital been too much admired. It could only be by long prejudice, and the bigotry of learning, that Milton could prefer the ancient tragedies, with their encumbrance of a chorus, to the exhibitions of the French and English stages; and it is only by a blind confidence in the reputation of Milton, that a drama can be praised in which the intermediate parts have neither cause nor consequence, neither hasten nor retard the catastrophe.

In this tragedy are however many particular beauties, many just sentiments and striking lines; but it wants that power of attracting the attention which a well-connected plan produces.

Milton would not have excelled in dramatic writing; he knew human nature only in the gross, and

had never studied the shades of character, nor the combinations of concurring, or the perplexity of contending passions. He had read much, and knew what books could teach; but had mingled little in the world, and was deficient in the knowledge which experience must confer.

Through all his greater works there prevails an uniform peculiarity of *Diction*, a mode and cast of expression which bears little resemblance to that of any former writer; and which is so far removed from common use, that an unlearned reader, when he first opens his book, finds himself surprized by a new language.

This novelty has been, by those who can find nothing wrong in Milton, imputed to his laborious endeavours after words suitable to the grandeur of his ideas. *Our language*, says Addison, *sunk under him.* But the truth is, that, both in prose and verse, he had formed his style by a perverse and pedantick principle. He was desirous to use English words with a foreign idiom. This in all his prose is discovered and condemned; for there judgment operates freely, neither softened by the beauty, nor awed by the dignity of his thoughts; but such is the power of his poetry, that his call is obeyed without resistance, the reader feels himself in captivity to a higher and a nobler mind, and criticism sinks in admiration.

Milton's style was not modified by his subject; what is shewn with greater extent in "Paradise Lost" may be found in *Comus*. One source of his peculiarity was his familiarity with the Tuscan poets; the disposition of his words is, I think, frequently Italian;

perhaps sometimes combined with other tongues. Of him, at last, may be said what Jonson says of Spenser, that *he wrote no language*, but has formed what Butler calls a *Babylonish Dialect*, in itself harsh and barbarous, but made by exalted genius and extensive learning the vehicle of so much instruction and so much pleasure, that, like other lovers, we find grace in its deformity.

Whatever be the faults of his diction, he cannot want the praise of copiousness and variety; he was master of his language in its full extent; and has selected the melodious words with such diligence, that from his book alone the Art of English Poetry might be learned.

After his diction, something must be said of his *versification*. The *measure*, he says, *is the English heroick verse without rhyme*. Of this mode he had many examples among the Italians, and some in his own country. The Earl of Surrey is said to have translated one of Virgil's books without rhyme*; and, beside our tragedies, a few short poems had appeared in blank verse, particularly one tending to reconcile the nation to Raleigh's wild attempt upon Guiana, and probably written by Raleigh himself. These petty performances cannot be supposed to have much influenced Milton, who more probably took his hint from Trissino's *Italia Liberata*; and, finding blank verse easier than rhyme, was desirous of persuading himself that it is better.

Rhyme, he says, and says truly, is no necessary *adjunct of true poetry*. But, perhaps, of poetry, as a

* The Earl of Surrey translated *two* books of Virgil without rhyme; the second and the fourth. J. B.

mental operation, metre or musick is no necessary adjunct: it is however by the musick of metre that poetry has been discriminated in all languages; and, in languages melodiously constructed with a due proportion of long and short syllables, metre is sufficient. But one language cannot communicate its rules to another; where metre is scanty and imperfect, some help is necessary. The musick of the English heroick lines strikes the ear so faintly, that it is easily lost, unless all the syllables of every line co-operate together; this co-operation can be only obtained by the preservation of every verse unmingled with another as a distinct system of sounds; and this distinctness is obtained and preserved by the artifice of rhyme. The variety of pauses, so much boasted by the lovers of blank verse, changes the measures of an English poet to the periods of a declaimer; and there are only a few skilful and happy readers of Milton, who enable their audience to perceive where the lines end or begin. *Blank verse*, said an ingenious critick, *seems to be verse only to the eye.*

Poetry may subsist without rhyme, but English poetry will not often please; nor can rhyme ever be safely spared but where the subject is able to support itself. Blank verse makes some approach to that which is called the *lapidary style*; has neither the easiness of prose, nor the melody of numbers, and therefore tires by long continuance. Of the Italian writers without rhyme, whom Milton alledges as precedents, not one is popular; what reason could urge in its defence has been confuted by the ear.

But, whatever be the advantage of rhyme, I cannot

prevail on myself to wish that Milton had been a rhymer; for I cannot wish his work to be other than it is; yet like other heroes, he is to be admired rather than imitated. He that thinks himself capable of astonishing may write blank verse; but those that hope only to please must condescend to rhyme.

The highest praise of genius is original invention. Milton cannot be said to have contrived the structure of an epick poem, and therefore owes reverence to that vigour and amplitude of mind to which all generations must be indebted for the art of poetical narration, for the texture of the fable, the variation of incidents, the interposition of dialogue, and all the stratagems that surprise and enchain attention. But, of all the borrowers from Homer, Milton is perhaps the least indebted. He was naturally a thinker for himself, confident of his own abilities, and disdainful of help or hindrance: he did not refuse admission to the thoughts or images of his predecessors, but he did not seek them. From his contemporaries he neither courted nor received support; there is in his writings nothing by which the pride of other authors might be gratified, or favour gained; no exchange of praise, nor solicitation of support. His great works were performed under discountenance, and in blindness; but difficulties vanished at his touch; he was born for whatever is arduous; and his work is not the greatest of heroick poems, only because it is not the first.

BUTLER.

Of the great author of Hudibras there is a life prefixed to the later editions of his poem, by an unknown writer, and therefore of disputable authority; and some account is incidentally given by Wood, who confesses the uncertainty of his own narrative; more however than they knew cannot now be learned, and nothing remains but to compare and copy them.

Samuel Butler was born in the parish of Strensham in Worcestershire, according to his biographer, in 1612. This account Dr. Nash finds confirmed by the register. He was christened Feb. 14.

His father's condition is variously represented: Wood mentions him as competently wealthy; but Mr. Longueville, the son of Butler's principal friend, says he was an honest farmer with some small estate, who made a shift to educate his son at the grammar-school of Worcester, under Mr. Henry Bright*, from

* These are the words of the author of the short account of Butler prefixed to Hudibras, which Dr. Johnson, notwithstanding what he says above, seems to have supposed was written by Mr. Longueville, the father; but the contrary is to be inferred

whose care he removed for a short time to Cambridge; but, for want of money, was never made a member of any college. Wood leaves us rather doubtful whether he went to Cambridge or Oxford; but at last makes him pass six or seven years at Cambridge, without knowing in what hall or college; yet it can hardly be imagined that he lived so long in either university but as belonging to one house or another; and it is still less likely that he could have so long inhabited a place of learning with so little distinction as to leave his residence uncertain. Dr. Nash has discovered that his father was owner of a house and a little land, worth about eight pounds a year, still called *Butler's tenement*.

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from a subsequent passage, wherein the author laments that he had neither such an acquaintance nor interest with Mr. Longueville as to procure from him the golden remains of Butler there mentioned. He was probably led into the mistake by a note in the Biog. Brit. p. 1077, signifying, that the son of this gentleman was living in 1736.

Of this friend and generous patron of Butler, Mr. William Longueville, I find an account, written by a person who was well acquainted with him, to this effect, viz. that he was a conveyancing lawyer, and a bencher of the Inner Temple, and had raised himself from a low beginning to very great eminence in that profession; that he was eloquent and learned, of spotless integrity; that he supported an aged father who had ruined his fortunes by extravagance, and by his industry and application re-edified a ruined family; that he supported Butler, who, but for him, must literally have starved; and received from him as a recompence the papers called his Remains. Life of the Lord-keeper Guildford, p. 289. These have since been given to the publick by Mr. Thyer of Manchester: and the originals are now in the hands of the Rev. Dr. Farmer, master of Emanuel College, Cambridge. H.

Wood has his information from his brother, whose narrative placed him at Cambridge, in opposition to that of his neighbours, which sent him to Oxford. The brother's seems the best authority, till, by confessing his inability to tell his hall or college, he gives reason to suspect that he was resolved to bestow on him an academical education; but durst not name a college, for fear of detection.

He was for some time, according to the author of his Life, clerk to Mr. Jefferys of Earl's Croomb in Worcestershire, an eminent justice of the peace. In his service he had not only leisure for study, but for recreation: his amusements were musick and painting; and the reward of his pencil was the friendship of the celebrated Cooper. Some pictures, said to be his, were shewn to Dr. Nash, at Earl's Croomb; but, when he enquired for them some years afterwards, he found them destroyed, to stop windows, and owns that they hardly deserved a better fate.

He was afterwards admitted into the family of the Countess of Kent, where he had the use of a library; and so much recommended himself to Selden, that he was often employed by him in literary business. Selden, as is well known, was steward to the Countess, and is supposed to have gained much of his wealth by managing her estate.

In what character Butler was admitted into that Lady's service, how long he continued in it, and why he left it, is, like the other incidents of his life, utterly unknown.

The vicissitudes of his condition placed him afterwards in the family of Sir Samuel Luke, one of Cromwell's officers. Here he observed so much of

the character of the sectaries, that he is said to have written or begun his poem at this time; and it is likely that such a design would be formed in a place where he saw the principles and practices of the rebels, audacious and undisguised in the confidence of success.

At length the king returned, and the time came in which loyalty hoped for its reward. Butler, however, was only made secretary to the Earl of Carbury, president of the principality of Wales; who conferred on him the stewardship of Ludlow Castle, when the Court of the Marches was revived.

In this part of his life, he married Mrs. Herbert, a gentlewoman of a good family; and lived, says Wood, upon her fortune, having studied the common law, but never practised it. A fortune she had, says his biographer, but it was lost by bad securities.

In 1663 was published the first part, containing three cantos, of the poem of Hudibras, which, as Prior relates, was made known at Court by the taste and influence of the Earl of Dorset. When it was known, it was necessarily admired: the King quoted, the courtiers studied, and the whole party of the royalists applauded it. Every eye watched for the golden shower which was to fall upon the author, who certainly was not without his part in the general expectation.

In 1664 the second part appeared; the curiosity of the nation was rekindled, and the writer was again praised and elated. But praise was his whole reward. Clarendon, says Wood, gave him reason to hope for "places and employments of value and credit;" but no such advantages did he ever ob-

tain. It is reported that the King once gave him three hundred guineas; but of this temporary bounty I find no proof.

Wood relates that he was secretary to Villiers Duke of Buckingham, when he was Chancellor of Cambridge: this is doubted by the other writer, who yet allows the Duke to have been his frequent benefactor. That both these accounts are false there is reason to suspect, from a story told by Packe, in his account of the life of Wycherley; and from some verses which Mr. Thyer has published in the author's Remains.

"Mr. Wycherley," says Packe, "had always laid hold of an opportunity which offered of representing to the Duke of Buckingham how well Mr. Butler had deserved of the Royal Family, by writing his inimitable Hudibras; and that it was a reproach to the Court, that a person of his loyalty and wit should suffer in obscurity, and under the wants he did. The Duke always seemed to hearken to him with attention enough; and after some time undertook to recommend his pretensions to his Majesty. Mr. Wycherley, in hopes to keep him steady to his word, obtained of his Grace to name a day, when he might introduce that modest and unfortunate poet to his new patron. At last an appointment was made, and the place of meeting was agreed to be the Roebuck. Mr. Butler and his friend attended accordingly; the Duke joined them; but, as the D—l would have it, the door of the room where they sat was open, and his Grace, who had seated himself near it, observing a pimp of his acquaintance (the creature

too was a knight) trip by with a brace of ladies, immediately quitted his engagement to follow another kind of business, at which he was more ready than in doing good offices to men of desert, though no one was better qualified than he, both in regard to his fortune and understanding, to protect them, and, from that time to the day of his death, poor Butler never found the least effect of his promise!"

Such is the story. The verses are written with a degree of acrimony, such as neglect and disappointment might naturally excite; and such as it would be hard to imagine Butler capable of expressing against a man who had any claim to his gratitude.

Notwithstanding this discouragement and neglect, he still prosecuted his design; and in 1678 published the third part, which still leaves the poem imperfect and abrupt. How much more he originally intended, or with what events the action was to be concluded, it is vain to conjecture. Nor can it be thought strange that he should stop here, however unexpectedly. To write without reward is sufficiently unpleasing. He had now arrived at an age when he might think it proper to be in jest no longer, and perhaps his health might now begin to fail.

He died in 1680; and Mr. Longueville, having unsuccessfully solicited a subscription for his interment in Westminster Abbey, buried him at his own cost in the church-yard of Covent Garden *. Dr. Simon Patrick read the service.

* In a note in the "Biographia Britannica," p. 1075, he is said, on the authority of the younger Mr. Longueville, to have lived for some years in Rose-street, Covent-Garden, and also that he died

Granger was informed by Dr. Pearce, who named for his authority Mr. Lowndes of the Treasury, that Butler had a yearly pension of an hundred pounds. This is contradicted by all tradition, by the complaints of Oldham, and by the reproaches of Dryden; and I am afraid will never be confirmed.

About sixty years afterwards, Mr. Barber, a printer, Mayor of London, and a friend to Butler's principles, bestowed on him a monument in Westminster Abbey, thus inscribed:

M. S.
SAMUELIS BUTLERI,
Qui Strenshamiæ in agro Vigorn. nat. 1612,
obiit Lond. 1680.
Vir doctus imprimis, acer, integer;
Operibus Ingenii, non item præmiis, fœlix:
Satyrici apud nos Carminis Artifex egregius;
Quo simulatæ Religionis Larvam detraxit,
Et Perduellium scelera liberrimè exagitavit;
Scriptorum in suo genere, Primus & Postremus.
Ne, cui vivo deerant feré omnia,
Deesset etiam mortuo Tumulus,
Hoc tandem posito marmore, curavit
JOHANNES BARBER, Civis Londinensis, 1721.

After his death were published three small volumes of his posthumous works; I know not by whom collected, or by what authority ascertained*; and, lately, two volumes more have been printed by Mr. Thyer of Manchester, indubitably genuine. From

there; the latter of these particulars is rendered highly probable, by his being interred in the cemetery of that parish. H.

* They were collected into one, and published in 12mo. 1732. H.

none of these pieces can his life be traced, or his character discovered. Some verses, in the last collection, shew him to have been among those who ridiculed the institution of the Royal Society, of which the enemies were for some time very numerous and very acrimonious, for what reason it is hard to conceive, since the philosophers professed not to advance doctrines, but to produce facts; and the most zealous enemy of innovation must admit the gradual progress of experience, however he may oppose hypothetical temerity.

In this mist of obscurity passed the life of Butler, a man whose name can only perish with his language. The mode and place of his education are unknown; the events of his life are variously related; and all that can be told with certainty is, that he was poor.

THE poem of Hudibras is one of those compositions of which a nation may justly boast; as the images which it exhibits are domestick, the sentiments unborrowed and unexpected, and the strain of diction original and peculiar. We must not, however, suffer the pride, which we assume as the countrymen of Butler, to make any encroachment upon justice, nor appropriate those honours which others have a right to share. The poem of Hudibras is not wholly English; the original idea is to be found in the history of Don Quixote; a book to which a mind of the greatest powers may be indebted without disgrace.

Cervantes shews a man, who having, by the incessant perusal of incredible tales, subjected his under-

standing to his imagination, and familiarised his mind by pertinacious meditation to trains of incredible events, and scenes of impossible existence; goes out in the pride of knighthood to redress wrongs, and defend virgins, to rescue captive princesses, and tumble usurpers from their thrones; attended by a squire, whose cunning, too low for the suspicion of a generous mind, enables him often to cheat his master.

The hero of Butler is a Presbyterian Justice, who, in the confidence of legal authority and the rage of zealous ignorance, ranges the country to repress superstition and correct abuses, accompanied by an Independent Clerk, disputatious and obstinate, with whom he often debates, but never conquers him.

Cervantes had so much kindness for Don Quixote, that, however he embarrasses him with absurd distresses, he gives him so much sense and virtue as may preserve our esteem; wherever he is, or whatever he does, he is made by matchless dexterity commonly ridiculous, but never contemptible.

But for poor Hudibras, his poet had no tenderness; he chuses not that any pity should be shewn or respect paid him: he gives him up at once to laughter and contempt, without any quality that can dignify or protect him.

In forming the character of Hudibras, and describing his person and habiliments, the author seems to labour with a tumultuous confusion of dissimilar ideas. He had read the history of the mock knights-errant; he knew the notions and manners of a Presbyterian magistrate, and tried to unite the absurdities of both, however distant, in one personage. Thus he gives

him that pedantic ostentation of knowledge which has no relation to chivalry, and loads him with martial encumbrances that can add nothing to his civil dignity. He sends him out a *colonelling*, and yet never brings him within sight of war.

If Hudibras be considered as the representative of the Presbyterians, it is not easy to say why his weapons should be represented as ridiculous or useless; for, whatever judgment might be passed upon their knowledge or their arguments, experience had sufficiently shewn that their swords were not to be despised.

The hero, thus compounded of swaggerer and pedant, of knight and justice, is led forth to action, with his squire Ralpho, an Independent Enthusiast.

Of the contexture of events planned by the author, which is called the action of the poem, since it is left imperfect, no judgment can be made. It is probable, that the hero was to be led through many luckless adventures, which would give occasion, like his attack upon the *bear and fiddle*, to expose the ridiculous rigour of the sectaries; like his encounter with Sidrophel and Whacum, to make superstition and credulity contemptible; or, like his recourse to the low retailer of the law, discover the fraudulent practices of different professions.

What series of events he would have formed, or in what manner he would have rewarded or punished his hero, it is now vain to conjecture. His work must have had, as it seems, the defect which Dryden imputes to Spenser; the action could not have been one; there could only have been a succes-

sion of incidents, each of which might have happened without the rest, and which could not all co-operate to any single conclusion.

The discontinuity of the action might however have been easily forgiven, if there had been action enough; but I believe every reader regrets the paucity of events, and complains that in the poem of Hudibras, as in the history of Thucydides, there is more said than done. The scenes are too seldom changed, and the attention is tired with long conversation.

It is indeed much more easy to form dialogues than to contrive adventures. Every position makes way for an argument, and every objection dictates an answer. When two disputants are engaged upon a complicated and extensive question, the difficulty is not to continue, but to end the controversy. But whether it be that we comprehend but few of the possibilities of life, or that life itself affords little variety, every man who has tried knows how much labour it will cost to form such a combination of circumstances as shall have at once the grace of novelty and credibility, and delight fancy without violence to reason.

Perhaps the dialogue of this poem is not perfect. Some power of engaging the attention might have been added to it by quicker reciprocation, by seasonable interruptions, by sudden questions, and by a nearer approach to dramatick spriteliness; without which, fictitious speeches will always tire, however sparkling with sentences, and however variegated with allusions.

The great source of pleasure is variety. Uniformity must tire at last, though it be uniformity of excellence. We love to expect; and, when expectation is disappointed or gratified, we want to be again expecting. For this impatience of the present, whoever would please must make provision. The skilful writer *irritat, mulcet,* makes a due distribution of the still and animated parts. It is for want of this artful intertexture, and those necessary changes, that the whole of a book may be tedious, though all the parts are praised.

If inexhaustible wit could give perpetual pleasure, no eye would ever leave half-read the work of Butler; for what poet has ever brought so many remote images so happily together? It is scarcely possible to peruse a page without finding some association of images that was never found before. By the first paragraph the reader is amused, by the next he is delighted, and by a few more strained to astonishment; but astonishment is a toilsome pleasure; he is soon weary of wondering, and longs to be diverted.

> Omnia vult belle Matho dicere, dic aliquando
> Et bene, dic neutrum, dic aliquando male.

Imagination is useless without knowledge: nature gives in vain the power of combination, unless study and observation supply materials to be combined. Butler's treasures of knowledge appear proportioned to his expence: whatever topick employs his mind, he shews himself qualified to expand and illustrate it with all the accessories that books can furnish: he is found not only to have travelled the beaten road, but the bye-paths of literature; not only to have

taken general surveys, but to have examined particulars with minute inspection.

If the French boast the learning of Rabelais, we need not be afraid of confronting them with Butler.

But the most valuable parts of his performance are those which retired study and native wit cannot supply. [He that merely makes a book from books may be useful, but can scarcely be great.] Butler had not suffered life to glide beside him unseen or unobserved. He had watched with great diligence the operations of human nature, and traced the effects of opinion, humour, interest, and passion. From such remarks proceeded that great number of sententious distichs which have passed into conversation, and are added as proverbial axioms to the general stock of practical knowledge.

When any work has been viewed and admired, the first question of intelligent curiosity is, how was it performed? Hudibras was not a hasty effusion; it was not produced by a sudden tumult of imagination, or a short paroxysm of violent labour. To accumulate such a mass of sentiments at the call of accidental desire, or of sudden necessity, is beyond the reach and power of the most active and comprehensive mind. I am informed by Mr. Thyer, of Manchester, the excellent editor of this author's reliques, that he could shew something like Hudibras in prose. He has in his possession the common-place book, in which Butler reposited, not such events or precepts as are gathered by reading, but such remarks, similitudes, allusions, assemblages, or inferences, as occasion prompted, or meditation produced;

those thoughts that were generated in his own mind, and might be usefully applied to some future purpose. Such is the labour of those who write for immortality.

But human works are not easily found without a perishable part. Of the antient poets every reader feels the mythology tedious and oppressive. Of Hudibras, the manners, being founded on opinions, are temporary and local, and therefore become every day less intelligible, and less striking. What Cicero says of philosophy is true likewise of wit and humour, that "time effaces the fictions of opinion, and confirms the determinations of Nature." Such manners as depend upon standing relations and general passions are co-extended with the race of man; but those modifications of life, and peculiarities of practice, which are the progeny of error and perverseness, or at best of some accidental influence or transient persuasion, must perish with their parents.

Much therefore of that humour which transported the last* century with merriment is lost to us, who do not know the sour solemnity, the sullen superstition, the gloomy moroseness, and the stubborn scruples of the antient Puritans; or, if we knew them, derive our information only from books, or from tradition, have never had them before our eyes, and cannot but by recollection and study understand the lines in which they are satirized. Our grandfathers knew the picture from the life; we judge of the life by contemplating the picture.

It is scarcely possible, in the regularity and composure of the present time, to image the tumult of

* The *seventeenth*. N.

absurdity, and clamour of contradiction, which perplexed doctrine, disordered practice, and disturbed both publick and private quiet, in that age when subordination was broken, and awe was hissed away; when any unsettled innovator, who could hatch a half-formed notion, produced it to the publick; when every man might become a preacher, and almost every preacher could collect a congregation.

The wisdom of the nation is very reasonably supposed to reside in the parliament. What can be concluded of the lower classes of the people, when in one of the parliaments summoned by Cromwell it was seriously proposed, that all the records in the Tower should be burnt, that all memory of things past should be effaced, and that the whole system of life should commence anew?

We have never been witnesses of animosities excited by the use of minced pies and plumb-porridge; nor seen with what abhorrence those, who could eat them at all other times of the year, would shrink from them in December. An old Puritan who was alive in my childhood, being at one of the feasts of the church invited by a neighbour to partake his cheer, told him, that if he would treat him at an ale-house with beer brewed for all times and seasons, he should accept his kindness, but would have none of his superstitious meats or drinks.

One of the puritanical tenets was the illegality of all games of chance; and he that reads Gataker upon *Lots* may see how much learning and reason one of the first scholars of his age thought necessary to prove that it was no crime to throw a die, or play at cards, or to hide a shilling for the reckoning.

Astrology, however, against which so much of the satire is directed, was not more the folly of the Puritans than of others. It had in that time a very extensive dominion. Its predictions raised hopes and fears in minds which ought to have rejected it with contempt. In hazardous undertakings care was taken to begin under the influence of a propitious planet; and, when the king was prisoner in Carisbrook Castle, an astrologer was consulted what hour would be found most favourable to an escape.

What effect this poem had upon the publick, whether it shamed imposture, or reclaimed credulity, is not easily determined. Cheats can seldom stand long against laughter. It is certain that the credit of planetary intelligence wore fast away; though some men of knowledge, and Dryden among them, continued to believe that conjunctions and oppositions had a great part in the distribution of good or evil, and in the government of sublunary things.

Poetical Action ought to be probable upon certain suppositions, and such probability as burlesque requires is here violated only by one incident. Nothing can shew more plainly the necessity of doing something, and the difficulty of finding something to do, than that Butler was reduced to transfer to his hero the flagellation of Sancho, not the most agreeable fiction of Cervantes; very suitable indeed to the manners of that age and nation, which ascribed wonderful efficacy to voluntary penances; but so remote from the practice and opinions of the Hudibrastick time, that judgment and imagination are alike offended.

The diction of this poem is grossly familiar, and the numbers purposely neglected, except in a few places where the thoughts by their native excellence secure themselves from violation, being such as mean language cannot express. The mode of versification has been blamed by Dryden, who regrets that the heroick measure was not rather chosen. To the critical sentence of Dryden the highest reverence would be due, were not his decisions often precipitate, and his opinions immature. When he wished to change the measure, he probably would have been willing to change more. If he intended that, when the numbers were heroick, the diction should still remain vulgar, he planned a very heterogeneous and unnatural composition. If he preferred a general stateliness both of sound and words, he can be only understood to wish that Butler had undertaken a different work.

The measure is quick, spritely, and colloquial, suitable to the vulgarity of the words and the levity of the sentiments. But such numbers and such diction can gain regard only when they are used by a writer whose vigour of fancy and copiousness of knowledge entitle him to contempt of ornaments, and who, in confidence of the novelty and justness of his conceptions, can afford to throw metaphors and epithets away. To another that conveys common thoughts in careless versification, it will only be said, " Pauper videri Cinna vult, et est pauper." The meaning and diction will be worthy of each other, and criticism may justly doom them to perish together.

Nor even though another Butler should arise, would another Hudibras obtain the same regard. Burlesque consists in a disproportion between the style and the sentiments, or between the adventitious sentiments and the fundamental subject. It therefore, like all bodies compounded of heterogeneous parts, contains in it a principle of corruption. All disproportion is unnatural; and from what is unnatural we can derive only the pleasure which novelty produces. We admire it awhile as a strange thing; but, when it is no longer strange, we perceive its deformity. It is a kind of artifice, which by frequent repetition detects itself; and the reader, learning in time what he is to expect, lays down his book, as the spectator turns away from a second exhibition of those tricks, of which the only use is to shew that they can be played.

ROCHESTER.

JOHN WILMOT, afterwards Earl of Rochester, the son of Henry Earl of Rochester, better known by the title of Lord Wilmot, so often mentioned in Clarendon's History, was born April 10, 1647, at Ditchley in Oxfordshire. After a grammatical education at the school of Burford, he entered a nobleman into Wadham College in 1659, only twelve years old; and in 1661, at fourteen, was, with some other persons of high rank, made master of arts by Lord Clarendon in person.

He travelled afterwards into France and Italy; and at his return devoted himself to the Court. In 1665 he went to sea with Sandwich, and distinguished himself at Bergen by uncommon intrepidity; and the next summer served again on board Sir Edward Spragge, who, in the heat of the engagement, having a message of reproof to send to one of his captains, could find no man ready to carry it but Wilmot, who, in an open boat, went and returned amidst the storm of shot.

But his reputation for bravery was not lasting: he was reproached with slinking away in street quarrels, and leaving his companions to shift as they could without him; and Sheffield Duke of Buckingham has left a story of his refusal to fight him.

He had very early an inclination to intemperance,

which he totally subdued in his travels; but, when he became a courtier, he unhappily addicted himself to dissolute and vicious company, by which his principles were corrupted, and his manners depraved. He lost all sense of religious restraint; and, finding it not convenient to admit the authority of laws which he was resolved not to obey, sheltered his wickedness behind infidelity.

As he excelled in that noisy and licentious merriment which wine incites, his companions eagerly encouraged him in excess, and he willingly indulged it; till, as he confessed to Dr. Burnet, he was for five years together continually drunk, or so much inflamed by frequent ebriety, as in no interval to be master of himself.

In this state he played many frolicks, which it is not for his honour that we should remember, and which are not now distinctly known. He often pursued low amours in mean disguises, and always acted with great exactness and dexterity the characters which he assumed.

He once erected a stage on Tower-hill, and harangued the populace as a mountebank; and, having made physick part of his study, is said to have practised it successfully.

He was so much in favour with King Charles, that he was made one of the gentlemen of the bedchamber, and comptroller of Woodstock Park.

Having an active and inquisitive mind, he never, except in his paroxysms of intemperance, was wholly negligent of study: he read what is considered as polite learning so much, that he is mentioned by

Wood as the greatest scholar of all the nobility. Sometimes he retired into the country, and amused himself with writing libels, in which he did not pretend to confine himself to truth.

His favourite author in French was Boileau, and in English Cowley.

Thus in a course of drunken gaiety, and gross sensuality, with intervals of study perhaps yet more criminal, with an avowed contempt of all decency and order, a total disregard of every moral, and a resolute denial of every religious obligation, he lived worthless and useless, and blazed out his youth and his health in lavish voluptuousness; till, at the age of one-and-thirty, he had exhausted the fund of life, and reduced himself to a state of weakness and decay.

At this time he was led to an acquaintance with Dr. Burnet, to whom he laid open with great freedom the tenour of his opinions, and the course of his life, and from whom he received such conviction of the reasonableness of moral duty, and the truth of Christianity, as produced a total change both of his manners and opinions. The account of those salutary conferences is given by Burnet in a book, intituled, "Some Passages of the Life and Death of John Earl of Rochester," which the critick ought to read for its elegance, the philosopher for its arguments, and the saint for its piety. It were an injury to the reader to offer him an abridgement.

He died July 26, 1680, before he had completed his thirty-fourth year; and was so worn away by a long illness, that life went out without a struggle.

Lord Rochester was eminent for the vigour of his

colloquial wit, and remarkable for many wild pranks and sallies of extravagance. The glare of his general character diffused itself upon his writings; the compositions of a man whose name was heard so often, were certain of attention, and from many readers certain of applause. This blaze of reputation is not yet quite extinguished; and his poetry still retains some splendour beyond that which genius has bestowed.

Wood and Burnet give us reason to believe, that much was imputed to him which he did not write. I know not by whom the original collection was made, or by what authority its genuineness was ascertained. The first edition was published in the year of his death, with an air of concealment, professing in the title-page to be printed at Antwerp.

Of some of the pieces, however, there is no doubt: the Imitation of Horace's Satire, the Verses to Lord Mulgrave, the Satire against Man, the Verses upon *Nothing*, and perhaps some others, are I believe genuine, and perhaps most of those which the late collection exhibits.*

As he cannot be supposed to have found leisure for any course of continued study, his pieces are commonly short, such as one fit of resolution would produce.

His songs have no particular character; they tell,

* Dr. Johnson has made no mention of Valentinian, (altered from Beaumont and Fletcher,) which was published after his death by a friend, who describes him in the preface not only as being one of the greatest geniuses, but one of the most virtuous men that ever existed. J. B.

like other songs, in smooth and easy language, of scorn and kindness, dismission and desertion, absence and inconstancy, with the common places of artificial courtship. They are commonly smooth and easy; but have little nature, and little sentiment.

His imitation of Horace on Lucilius is not inelegant or unhappy. In the reign of Charles the Second began that adaptation, which has since been very frequent, of antient poetry to present times; and perhaps few will be found where the parallelism is better preserved than in this. The versification is indeed sometimes careless, but it is sometimes vigorous and weighty.

The strongest effort of his Muse is his poem upon *Nothing*. He is not the first who has chosen this barren topick for the boast of his fertility. There is a poem called *Nihil* in Latin by Passerat, a poet and critick of the sixteenth century in France; who, in his own epitaph, expresses his zeal for good poetry thus:

— Molliter ossa quiescent
Sint modo carminibus non onerata malis.

His works are not common, and therefore I shall subjoin his verses.

In examining this performance, *Nothing* must be considered as having not only a negative, but a kind of positive signification; as I need not fear thieves, I have *nothing*, and *nothing* is a very powerful protector. In the first part of the sentence it is taken negatively; in the second it is taken positively, as an agent. In one of Boileau's lines it was a question, whether he should use *à rien faire*, or *à ne rien*

faire; and the first was preferred, because it gave *rien* a sense in some sort positive. *Nothing* can be a subject only in its positive sense, and such a sense is given it in the first line:

> *Nothing*, thou elder brother ev'n to shade.

In this line, I know not whether he does not allude to a curious book *De Umbra*, by Wowerus, which, having told the qualities of *Shade*, concludes with a poem in which are these lines:

> Jam primum terram validis circumspice claustris
> Suspensam totam, decus admirabile mundi
> Terrasque tractusque maris, camposque liquentes
> Aeris, et vasti laqueata palatia cœli——
> Omnibus UMBRA prior.

The positive sense is generally preserved with great skill through the whole poem; though sometimes, in a subordinate sense, the negative *nothing* is injudiciously mingled. Passerat confounds the two senses.

Another of his most vigorous pieces is his Lampoon on Sir Car Scroop, who, in a poem called "The Praise of Satire," had some lines like these*:

> He who can push into a midnight fray
> His brave companion, and then run away,
> Leaving him to be murder'd in the street,
> Then put it off with some buffoon conceit;
> Him, thus dishonour'd, for a wit you own,
> And court him as top fidler of the town.

This was meant of Rochester, whose *buffoon conceit* was, I suppose, a saying often mentioned, that

* I quote from memory. Dr. J.

every man would be a Coward if he durst; and drew from him those furious verses; to which Scroop made in reply an epigram, ending with these lines:

> Thou canst hurt no man's fame with thy ill word;
> Thy pen is full as harmless as thy sword.

Of the satire against *Man*, Rochester can only claim what remains when all Boileau's part is taken away.

In all his works there is spriteliness and vigour, and every where may be found tokens of a mind which study might have carried to excellence. What more can be expected from a life spent in ostentatious contempt of regularity, and ended before the abilities of many other men began to be displayed?*

* The late George Steevens, Esq. made the Selection of Rochester's Poems which appears in Dr. Johnson's edition; but Mr. Malone observes that the same task had been performed in the early part of the last century by Jacob Tonson. C.

Poema Cl. V. Joannis Passeratii,
Regii in Academia Parisiensi Professoris.
Ad ornatissimum virum Erricum Memmium.

Janus adest, festæ poscunt sua dona Kalendæ;
Munus abest festis quod possim offerre Kalendis.
Siccine Castalius nobis exaruit humor?
Usque adeò ingenii nostri est exhausta facultas,
Immunem ut videat redeuntis janitor anni?
Quod nusquam est, potius nova per vestigia quæram.
Ecce autem partes dum sese versat in omnes
Invenit mea Musa NIHIL, ne despice munus.
Nam NIHIL est gemmis, NIHIL est pretiosius auro.
Huc animum, huc igitur vultus adverte benignos:
Res nova narratur quæ nulli audita priorum,
Ausonii & Graii dixerunt cætera vates,
Ausoniæ indictum NIHIL est Græcæque Camœnæ.
E cœlo quacunque Ceres sua prospicit arva,
Aut genitor liquidis orbem complectitur ulnis
Oceanus, NIHIL interitus & originis expers.
Immortale NIHIL, NIHIL omni parte beatum.
Quòd si hinc majestas & vis divina probatur,
Num quid honore deûm, num quid dignabimur aris?
Conspectu lucis NIHIL est jucundius almæ,
Vere NIHIL, NIHIL irriguo formosius horto,
Floridius pratis, Zephyri clementius aura;
In bello sanctum NIHIL est, Martisque tumultu:
Justum in pace NIHIL, NIHIL est in fœdere tutum.
Felix cui NIHIL est, (fuerant hæc vota Tibullo)
Non timet insidias: fures, incendia temnit:
Sollicitas sequitur nullo sub judice lites.
Ille ipse invictis qui subjicit omnia fatis
Zenonis sapiens, NIHIL admiratur & optat.

Socraticique gregis fuit ista scientia quondam,
Scire NIHIL, studio cui nunc incumbitur uni.
Nec quicquam in ludo mavult didicisse juventus,
Ad magnas quia ducit opes, et culmen honorum.
Nosce NIHIL, nosces fertur quod Pythagoreæ
Grano hærere fabæ, cui vox adjuncta negantis.
Multi Mercurio freti duce viscera terræ
Pura liquefaciunt simul, et patrimonia miscent,
Arcano instantes operi, et carbonibus atris,
Qui tandem exhausti damnis, fractique labore,
Inveniunt atque inventum NIHIL usque requirunt.
Hoc dimetiri non ulla decempeda possit:
Nec numeret Libycæ numerum qui callet arenæ:
Et Phœbo ignotum NIHIL est, NIHIL altius astris.
Tùque, tibi licet eximium sit mentis acumen,
Omnem in naturam penetrans, et in abdita rerum,
Pace tua, Memmi, NIHIL ignorare vidêris.
Sole tamen NIHIL est, et puro clarius igne.
Tange NIHIL, dicesque NIHIL sine corpore tangi.
Cerne NIHIL, cerni dices NIHIL absque colore.
Surdum audit loquitúrque NIHIL sine voce, volátque
Absque ope pennarum, et graditur sine cruribus ullis.
Absque loco motuque NIHIL per inane vagatur.
Humano generi utilius NIHIL arte medendi.
Ne rhombos igitur, neu Thessala murmura tentet
Idalia vacuum trajectus arundine pectus,
Neu legat Idæo Dictæum in vertice gramen.
Vulneribus sævi NIHIL auxiliatur amoris.
Vexerit et quemvis trans mœstas portitor undas,
Ad superos imo NIHIL hunc revocabit ab orco.
Inferni NIHIL inflectit præcordia regis,
Parcarúmque colos, et inexorabile pensum.
Obruta Phlegræis campis Titania pubes
Fulmineo sensit NIHIL esse potentius ictu:
Porrigitur magni NIHIL extra mœnia mundi:

Diique NIHIL metuunt. Quid longo carmine plura
Commemorem? virtute NIHIL praestantius ipsa,
Splendidius NIHIL est; NIHIL est Jove denique majus.
Sed tempus finem argutis imponere nugis:
Ne tibi si multa laudem mea carmina charta,
De NIHILO NIHILI pariant fastidia versus.

ROSCOMMON.

WENTWORTH DILLON, Earl of Roscommon, was the son of James Dillon and Elizabeth Wentworth, sister to the Earl of Strafford. He was born in Ireland* during the lieutenancy of Strafford, who, being both his uncle and his godfather, gave him his own surname. His father, the third Earl of Roscommon, had been converted by Usher to the Protestant religion†; and when the Popish rebellion broke out, Strafford thinking the family in great danger from the fury of the Irish, sent for his godson, and placed him at his own seat in Yorkshire, where he was instructed in Latin; which he learned so as to write it with purity and elegance, though he was never able to retain the rules of grammar.

Such is the account given by Mr. Fenton, from whose notes on Waller most of this account must be borrowed, though I know not whether all that he relates is certain. The instructor whom he assigns to Roscommon is one Dr. Hall, by whom he cannot mean the famous Hall, then an old man and a bishop.

* The Biographia Britannica says, probably about the year 1632; but this is inconsistent with the date of Strafford's viceroyalty in the following page. C.

† It was his grandfather, Sir Robert Dillon, second Earl of Roscommon, who was converted from popery; and his conversion is recited in the patent of Sir James, the first Earl of Roscommon, as one of the grounds of his creation. M.

When the storm broke out upon Strafford, his house was a shelter no longer; and Dillon, by the advice of Usher, was sent to Caen, where the Protestants had then an university, and continued his studies under Bochart.

Young Dillon, who was sent to study under Bochart, and who is represented as having already made great proficiency in literature, could not be more than nine years old. Strafford went to govern Ireland in 1633, and was put to death eight years afterwards. That he was sent to Caen, is certain: that he was a great scholar, may be doubted.

At Caen he is said to have had some preternatural intelligence of his father's death.

"The Lord Roscommon, being a boy of ten years of age, at Caen in Normandy, one day was, as it were, madly extravagant in playing; leaping, getting over the tables, boards, &c. He was wont to be sober enough; they said, God grant this bodes no ill-luck to him! In the heat of this extravagant fit, he cries out, *My father is dead.* A fortnight after, news came from Ireland that his father was dead. This account I had from Mr. Knolles, who was his governor, and then with him,—since secretary to the Earl of Strafford; and I have heard his lordship's relations confirm the same." *Aubrey's Miscellany.*

The present age is very little inclined to favour any accounts of this kind, nor will the name of Aubrey much recommend it to credit: it ought not, however, to be omitted, because better evidence of a fact cannot easily be found than is here offered; and it must be by preserving such relations that we may at last judge how much they are to be re-

garded. If we stay to examine this account, we shall see difficulties on both sides: here is the relation of a fact given by a man who had no interest to deceive, and who could not be deceived himself; and here is, on the other hand, a miracle which produces no effect; the order of nature is interrupted to discover not a future but only a distant event, the knowledge of which is of no use to him to whom it is revealed. Between these difficulties, what way shall be found? Is reason or testimony to be rejected? I believe, what Osborne says of an appearance of sanctity, may be applied to such impulses or anticipations as this: "Do not wholly slight them, because they may be true; but do not easily trust them, because they may be false."

The state both of England and Ireland was at this time such, that he who was absent from either country had very little temptation to return; and therefore Roscommon, when he left Caen, travelled into Italy, and amused himself with its antiquities, and particularly with medals, in which he acquired uncommon skill.

At the Restoration, with the other friends of monarchy, he came to England, was made captain of the band of pensioners, and learned so much of the dissoluteness of the court, that he addicted himself immoderately to gaming, by which he was engaged in frequent quarrels, and which undoubtedly brought upon him its usual concomitants, extravagance and distress.

After some time, a dispute about part of his estate forced him into Ireland, where he was made by the duke of Ormond captain of the guards, and met with an adventure thus related by Fenton:

"He was at Dublin as much as ever distempered with the same fatal affection for play, which engaged him in one adventure that well deserves to be related. As he returned to his lodgings from a gaming-table, he was attacked in the dark by three ruffians, who were employed to assassinate him. The Earl defended himself with so much resolution, that he dispatched one of the aggressors: whilst a gentleman, accidentally passing that way, interposed, and disarmed another: the third secured himself by flight. This generous assistant was a disbanded officer, of a good family and fair reputation; who, by what we call the partiality of fortune, to avoid censuring the iniquities of the times, wanted even a plain suit of cloaths to make a decent appearance at the castle. But his lordship, on this occasion, presenting him to the duke of Ormond, with great importunity prevailed with his grace, that he might resign his post of captain of the guards to his friend; which for about three years the gentleman enjoyed, and, upon his death, the duke returned the commission to his generous benefactor."

When he had finished his business, he returned to London; was made master of the horse to the duchess of York; and married the lady Frances, daughter of the earl of Burlington, and widow of colonel Courteney.*

He now busied his mind with literary projects, and formed the plan of a society for refining our

* He was married to lady Frances Boyle in April 1662. By this lady he had no issue. He married secondly, 10th Nov. 1674, Isabella, daughter of Mathew Boynton, of Barmister, in Yorkshire. M.

language and fixing its standard; "in imitation," says Fenton, "of those learned and polite societies with which he had been acquainted abroad." In this design his friend Dryden is said to have assisted him.

The same design, it is well known, was revived by Dr. Swift in the ministry of Oxford; but it has never since been publickly mentioned, though at that time great expectations were formed by some of its establishment and its effects. Such a society might, perhaps, without much difficulty, be collected; but that it would produce what is expected from it, may be doubted.

The Italian academy seems to have obtained its end. The language was refined, and so fixed that it has changed but little. The French academy thought they had refined their language, and doubtless thought rightly; but the event has not shewn that they fixed it; for the French of the present time is very different from that of the last century.

In this country an academy could be expected to do but little. If an academician's place were profitable, it would be given by interest; if attendance were gratuitous, it would be rarely paid, and no man would endure the least disgust. Unanimity is impossible, and debate would separate the assembly.

But suppose the philological decree made and promulgated, what would be its authority? In absolute governments, there is sometimes a general reverence paid to all that has the sanction of power, and the countenance of greatness. How little this is the state of our country needs not to be told. We live in an age in which it is a kind of publick sport

to refuse all respect that cannot be enforced. The edicts of an English academy would probably be read by many, only that they might be sure to disobey them.

That our language is in perpetual danger of corruption cannot be denied; but what prevention can be found? The present manners of the nation would deride authority; and therefore nothing is left but that every writer should criticise himself.

All hopes of new literary institutions were quickly suppressed by the contentious turbulence of King James's reign; and Roscommon, foreseeing that some violent concussion of the state was at hand, purposed to retire to Rome, alleging, that "it was best to sit near the chimney when the chamber smoked;" a sentence, of which the application seems not very clear.

His departure was delayed by the gout; and he was so impatient either of hinderance or of pain, that he submitted himself to a French empirick, who is said to have repelled the disease into his bowels.

At the moment in which he expired, he uttered, with an energy of voice that expressed the most fervent devotion, two lines of his own version of *Dies Iræ:*

> My God, my Father, and my Friend,
> Do not forsake me in my end.

He died in 1684; and was buried with great pomp in Westminster Abbey.

His poetical character is given by Mr. Fenton:

"In his writings," says Fenton, "we view the image of a mind which was naturally serious and solid; richly furnished and adorned with all the

ornaments of learning, unaffectedly disposed in the most regular and elegant order. His imagination might have probably been more fruitful and spritely, if his judgment had been less severe. But that severity (delivered in a masculine, clear, succinct style) contributed to make him so eminent in the didactical manner, that no man, with justice, can affirm he was ever equalled by any of our nation, without confessing at the same time that he is inferior to none. In some other kinds of writing his genius seems to have wanted fire to attain the point of perfection; but who can attain it?"

From this account of the riches of his mind, who would not imagine that they had been displayed in large volumes and numerous performances? Who would not, after the perusal of this character, be surprised to find that all the proofs of this genius, and knowledge, and judgment, are not sufficient to form a single book, or to appear otherwise than in conjunction with the works of some other writer of the same petty size*? But thus it is that characters are written: we know somewhat, and we imagine the rest. The observation, that his imagination would probably

* They were published, together with those of Duke, in an octavo volume, in 1717. The editor, whoever he was, professes to have taken great care to procure and insert all of his lordship's poems that are truly genuine. The truth of this assertion is flatly denied by the author of an account of Mr. John Pomfret, prefixed to his Remains; who asserts, that the Prospect of Death was written by that person many years after Lord Roscommon's decease; as also, that the paraphrase of the Prayer of Jeremy was written by a gentleman of the name of Southcourt, living in the year 1724. H.

have been more fruitful and spritely, if his judgment had been less severe, may be answered, by a remarker somewhat inclined to cavil, by a contrary supposition, that his judgment would probably have been less severe, if his imagination had been more fruitful. It is ridiculous to oppose judgment to imagination; for it does not appear that men have necessarily less of one as they have more of the other.

We must allow of Roscommon, what Fenton has not mentioned so distinctly as he ought, and what is yet very much to his honour, that he is perhaps the only correct writer in verse before Addison; and that, if there are not so many or so great beauties in his compositions as in those of some contemporaries, there are at least fewer faults. Nor is this his highest praise; for Mr. Pope has celebrated him as the only moral writer of King Charles's reign:

> Unhappy Dryden! in all Charles's days,
> Roscommon only boasts unspotted lays.

His great work is his Essay on Translated Verse; of which Dryden writes thus in the preface to his Miscellanies:

"It was my Lord Roscommon's Essay on Translated Verse," says Dryden, "which made me uneasy, till I tried whether or no I was capable of following his rules, and of reducing the speculation into practice. For many a fair precept in poetry is like a seeming demonstration in mathematicks, very specious in the diagram, but failing in the mechanick operation. I think I have generally observed his

instructions: I am sure my reason is sufficiently convinced both of their truth and usefulness; which, in other words, is to confess no less a vanity than to pretend that I have, at least in some places, made examples to his rules."

This declaration of Dryden will, I am afraid, be found little more than one of those cursory civilities which one author pays to another; for when the sum of Lord Roscommon's precepts is collected, it will not be easy to discover how they can qualify their reader for a better performance of translation than might have been attained by his own reflections.

He that can abstract his mind from the elegance of the poetry, and confine it to the sense of the precepts, will find no other direction than that the author should be suitable to the translator's genius; that he should be such as may deserve a translation; that he who intends to translate him should endeavour to understand him; that perspicuity should be studied, and unusual and uncouth names sparingly inserted; and that the style of the original should be copied in its elevation and depression. These are the rules that are celebrated as so definite and important; and for the delivery of which to mankind so much honour has been paid. Roscommon has indeed deserved his praises, had they been given with discernment, and bestowed not on the rules themselves, but the art with which they are introduced, and the decorations with which they are adorned.

The Essay, though generally excellent, is not without its faults. The story of the Quack, borrowed

from Boileau, was not worth the importation; he has confounded the British and Saxon mythology:

> I grant that from some mossy idol oak,
> In double rhymes, our *Thor* and *Woden* spoke.

The oak, as I think Gildon has observed, belonged to the British Druids, and *Thor* and *Woden* were Saxon deities. Of the *double rhymes*, which he so liberally supposes, he certainly had no knowledge.

His interposition of a long paragraph of blank verses is unwarrantably licentious. Latin poets might as well have introduced a series of iambicks among their heroicks.

His next work is the translation of the Art of Poetry; which has received, in my opinion, not less praise than it deserves. Blank verse, left merely to its numbers, has little operation either on the ear or mind: it can hardly support itself without bold figures and striking images. A poem, frigidly didactick, without rhyme, is so near to prose, that the reader only scorns it for pretending to be verse.

Having disentangled himself from the difficulties of rhyme, he may justly be expected to give the sense of Horace with great exactness, and to suppress no subtilty of sentiment for the difficulty of expressing it. This demand, however, his translation will not satisfy; what he found obscure, I do not know that he has ever cleared.

Among his smaller works, the Eclogue of Virgil and the *Dies Iræ* are well translated; though the best line in the *Dies Iræ* is borrowed from Dryden. In return, succeeding poets have borrowed from Roscommon.

In the verses on the Lap-dog, the pronouns *thou* and *you* are offensively confounded; and the turn at the end is from Waller.

His versions of the two odes of Horace are made with great liberty, which is not recompensed by much elegance or vigour.

His political verses are spritely, and when they were written must have been very popular.

Of the scene of *Guarini*, and the prologue to *Pompey*, Mrs. Phillips, in her letters to Sir Charles Cotterel, has given the history.

"Lord Roscommon," says she, "is certainly one of the most promising young noblemen in Ireland. He has paraphrased a Psalm admirably; and a scene of Pastor Fido very finely, in some places much better than Sir Richard Fanshaw. This was undertaken merely in compliment to me, who happened to say that it was the best scene in Italian, and the worst in English. He was only two hours about it. It begins thus:

> "Dear happy groves, and you the dark retreat
> Of silent horrour, Rest's eternal seat."

From these lines, which are since somewhat mended, it appears that he did not think a work of two hours fit to endure the eye of criticism without revisal.

When Mrs. Phillips was in Ireland, some ladies that had seen her translation of Pompey, resolved to bring it on the stage at Dublin; and, to promote their design, Lord Roscommon gave them a prologue, and Sir Edward Deering an epilogue; "which," says she, "are the best performances of those kinds I ever

saw." If this is not criticism, it is at least gratitude. The thought of bringing Cæsar and Pompey into Ireland, the only country over which Cæsar never had any power, is lucky.

Of Roscommon's works, the judgment of the publick seems to be right. He is elegant, but not great; he never labours after exquisite beauties, and he seldom falls into gross faults. His versification is smooth, but rarely vigorous; and his rhymes are remarkably exact. He improved taste, if he did not enlarge knowledge, and may be numbered among the benefactors to English literature.*

* This Life was originally written by Dr. Johnson in the Gentleman's Magazine for May 1748. It then had notes, which are now incorporated with the text. C.

OTWAY.

Of Thomas Otway, one of the first names in the English drama, little is known; nor is there any part of that little which his biographer can take pleasure in relating.

He was born at Trottin in Sussex, March 3, 1651, the son of Mr. Humphry Otway, rector of Woolbeding. From Winchester-school, where he was educated, he was entered, in 1669, a commoner of Christ-church; but left the university without a degree, whether for want of money, or from impatience of academical restraint, or mere eagerness to mingle with the world, is not known.

It seems likely that he was in hope of being busy and conspicuous; for he went to London, and commenced player; but found himself unable to gain any reputation on the stage.*

* In Roscius Anglicanus, by Downes the prompter, p. 34, we learn, that it was the character of the King in Mrs. Behn's "Forced Marriage, or The Jealous Bridegroom," which Mr. Otway attempted to perform, and failed in. This event appears to have happened in the year 1672. R.

This kind of inability he shared with Shakspeare and Jonson, as he shared likewise some of their excellencies. It seems reasonable to expect that a great dramatick poet should without difficulty become a great actor; that he who can feel, could express; that he who can excite passion, should exhibit with great readiness its external modes: but since experience has fully proved, that of those powers, whatever be their affinity, one may be possessed in a great degree by him who has very little of the other; it must be allowed that they depend upon different faculties, or on different use of the same faculty; that the actor must have a pliancy of mien, a flexibility of countenance, and a variety of tones, which the poet may be easily supposed to want; or that the attention of the poet and the player has been differently employed; the one has been considering thought, and the other action; one has watched the heart, and the other contemplated the face.

Though he could not gain much notice as a player, he felt in himself such powers as might qualify for a dramatick author; and, in 1675, his twenty-fifth year, produced *Alcibiades*, a tragedy; whether from the Alcibiade of Palaprat, I have not means to enquire. Langbaine, the great detector of plagiarism, is silent.

In 1677 he published *Titus and Berenice*, translated from Rapin, with the *Cheats of Scapin*, from Moliere; and in 1678, *Friendship in Fashion*, a comedy, which, whatever might be its first reception, was, upon its revival at Drury-lane in 1749, hissed off the stage for immorality and obscenity.

Want of morals, or of decency, did not in those days exclude any man from the company of the wealthy and the gay, if he brought with him any powers of entertainment; and Otway is said to have been at this time a favourite companion of the dissolute wits. But, as he who desires no virtue in his companion has no virtue in himself, those whom Otway frequented had no purpose of doing more for him than to pay his reckoning. They desired only to drink and laugh: their fondness was without benevolence, and their familiarity without friendship. Men of wit, says one of Otway's biographers, received at that time no favour from the Great but to share their riots; "from which they were dismissed again to their own narrow circumstances. Thus they languished in poverty without the support of eminence."

Some exception, however, must be made. The Earl of Plymouth, one of King Charles's natural sons, procured for him a cornet's commission in some troops then sent into Flanders. But Otway did not prosper in his military character: for he soon left his commission behind him, whatever was the reason, and came back to London in extreme indigence; which Rochester mentions with merciless insolence in the "Session of the Poets:"

Tom Otway came next, Tom Shadwell's dear zany,
And swears for heroicks he writes best of any;
Don Carlos his pockets so amply had fill'd,
That his mange was quite cur'd, and his lice were all kill'd.
But Apollo had seen his face on the stage,
And prudently did not think fit to engage
The scum of a play-house, for the prop of an age.

Don Carlos, from which he is represented as having received so much benefit, was played in 1675. It appears, by the lampoon, to have had great success, and is said to have been played thirty nights together. This, however, it is reasonable to doubt*, as so long a continuance of one play upon the stage is a very wide deviation from the practice of that time; when the ardour for theatrical entertainments was not yet diffused through the whole people, and the audience, consisting nearly of the same persons, could be drawn together only by variety.

The Orphan was exhibited in 1680. This is one of the few plays that keep possession of the stage, and has pleased for almost a century, through all the vicissitudes of dramatick fashion. Of this play nothing new can easily be said. It is a domestick tragedy drawn from middle life. Its whole power is upon the affections; for it is not written with much comprehension of thought, or elegance of expression. But if the heart is interested, many other beauties may be wanting, yet not be missed.

The same year produced *The History and Fall of Caius Marius;* much of which is borrowed from the Romeo and Juliet of Shakspeare.

In 1683† was published the first, and next year‡ the second, parts of *The Soldier's Fortune*, two comedies now forgotten; and in 1685§, his last and

* This doubt is indeed very reasonable. I know not where it is said that Don Carlos was acted *thirty* nights together. Wherever it is said, it is untrue. Downes, who is perfectly good authority on this point, informs us, that it was performed *ten* days successively. M.

† 1681. ‡ 1684. § 1682.

greatest dramatick work, *Venice Preserved*, a tragedy, which still continues to be one of the favourites of the publick, notwithstanding the want of morality in the original design, and the despicable scenes of vile comedy with which he has diversified his tragick action*. By comparing this with his "Orphan," it will appear that his images were by time become stronger, and his language more energetick. The striking passages are in every mouth; and the publick seems to judge rightly of the faults and excellences of this play, that it is the work of a man not attentive to decency, nor zealous for virtue; but of one who conceived forcibly, and drew originally, by consulting nature in his own breast.

Together with those plays he wrote the poems which are in the present collection, and translated from the French the "History of the Triumvirate."

All this was performed before he was thirty-four years old; for he died April 14, 1685, in a manner which I am unwilling to mention. Having been compelled by his necessities to contract debts, and hunted, as is supposed, by the terriers of the law, he retired to a publick house on Tower-hill, where he is said to have died of want; or, as it is related by one of his biographers, by swallowing, after a long fast, a piece of bread which charity had supplied. He went out, as is reported, almost naked, in the rage of hunger, and, finding a gentleman in a neighbouring coffee-house, asked him for a shilling.

* The 'despicable scenes of vile comedy' can be no bar to its being a favourite of the publick, as they are always omitted in the representation. J. B.

The gentleman gave him a guinea; and Otway going away bought a roll, and was choaked with the first mouthful. All this, I hope, is not true; and there is this ground of better hope, that Pope, who lived near enough to be well informed, relates in Spence's Memorials, that he died of a fever caught by violent pursuit of a thief that had robbed one of his friends. But that indigence, and its concomitants, sorrow and despondency, pressed hard upon him, has never been denied, whatever immediate cause might bring him to the grave.

Of the poems which the present collection admits, the longest is the *Poet's Complaint of his Muse*, part of which I do not understand; and in that which is less obscure I find little to commend. The language is often gross, and the numbers are harsh. Otway had not much cultivated versification, nor much replenished his mind with general knowledge. His principal power was in moving the passions, to which Dryden* in his latter years left an illustrious testimony. He appears by some of his verses to have been a zealous royalist, and had what was in those times the common reward of loyalty; he lived and died neglected.

* In his preface to Fresnoy's Art of Painting. Dr. J.

WALLER.

EDMUND WALLER was born on the third of March, 1605, at Colshill in Hertfordshire. His father was Robert Waller, Esquire, of Agmondesham in Buckinghamshire, whose family was originally a branch of the Kentish Wallers; and his mother was the daughter of John Hampden, of Hampden in the same county, and sister to Hampden, the zealot of rebellion.

His father died while he was yet an infant, but left him a yearly income of three thousand five hundred pounds; which, rating together the value of money and the customs of life, we may reckon more than equivalent to ten thousand at the present time.

He was educated, by the care of his mother, at Eaton; and removed afterwards to King's College in Cambridge. He was sent to parliament in his eighteenth, if not in his sixteenth year, and frequented the court of James the First, where he heard a very remarkable conversation, which the writer of the Life prefixed to his Works, who seems to have

been well informed of facts, though he may sometimes err in chronology, has delivered as indubitably certain:

"He found Dr. Andrews, Bishop of Winchester, and Dr. Neale, Bishop of Durham, standing behind his Majesty's chair; and there happened something extraordinary," continues this writer, "in the conversation those prelates had with the King, on which Mr. Waller did often reflect. His Majesty asked the Bishops, 'My Lords, cannot I take my subjects' money, when I want it, without all this formality of parliament?' The Bishop of Durham readily answered, 'God forbid, Sir, but you should: you are the breath of our nostrils.' Whereupon the King turned and said to the Bishop of Winchester, 'Well, my Lord, what say you?' 'Sir,' replied the bishop, 'I have no skill to judge of parliamentary cases.' The King answered, 'No put-offs, my Lord; answer me presently.' 'Then, Sir,' said he, 'I think it is lawful for you to take my brother Neale's money; for he offers it.' Mr. Waller said, the company was pleased with this answer, and the wit of it seemed to affect the King; for, a certain lord coming in soon after, his Majesty cried out, 'Oh, my Lord, they say you lig with my Lady.' 'No, Sir,' says his Lordship in confusion; 'but I like her company, because she has so much wit.' 'Why then,' says the King, 'do you not lig with my Lord of Winchester there?"'

Waller's political and poetical life began nearly together. In his eighteenth year he wrote the poem that appears first in his works, on "the Prince's Escape at St. Andero;" a piece which justifies the observa-

tion made by one of his editors, that he attained, by a felicity like instinct, a style which perhaps will never be obsolete; and that, "were we to judge only by the wording, we could not know what was wrote at twenty, and what at fourscore." His versification was, in his first essay, such as it appears in his last performance. By the perusal of Fairfax's translation of Tasso, to which, as * Dryden relates, he confessed himself indebted for the smoothness of his numbers, and by his own nicety of observation, he had already formed such a system of metrical harmony as he never afterwards much needed, or much endeavoured, to improve. Denham corrected his numbers by experience, and gained ground gradually upon the ruggedness of his age; but what was acquired by Denham was inherited by Waller.

The next poem, of which the subject seems to fix the time, is supposed by Mr. Fenton to be the Address to the Queen, which he considers as congratulating her arrival, in Waller's twentieth year. He is apparently mistaken; for the mention of the nation's obligations to her frequent pregnancy, proves that it was written when she had brought many children. We have therefore no date of any other poetical production before that which the murder of the Duke of Buckingham occasioned: the steadiness with which the King received the news in the chapel, deserved indeed to be rescued from oblivion.

Neither of these pieces that seem to carry their own dates could have been the sudden effusion of fancy. In the verses on the Prince's escape, the pre-

* Preface to his Fables. Dr. J.

diction of his marriage with the Princess of France must have been written after the event; in the other, the promises of the King's kindness to the descendants of Buckingham, which could not be properly praised till it had appeared by its effects, shew that time was taken for revision and improvement. It is not known that they were published till they appeared long afterwards with other poems.

Waller was not one of those idolaters of praise who cultivate their minds at the expence of their fortunes. Rich as he was by inheritance, he took care early to grow richer, by marrying Mrs. Banks, a great heiress in the city, whom the interest of the court was employed to obtain for Mr. Crofts. Having brought him a son, who died young, and a daughter, who was afterwards married to Mr. Dormer of Oxfordshire, she died in childbed, and left him a widower of about five-and-twenty, gay and wealthy, to please himself with another marriage.

Being too young to resist beauty, and probably too vain to think himself resistible, he fixed his heart, perhaps half fondly and half ambitiously, upon the Lady Dorothea Sidney, eldest daughter of the Earl of Leicester, whom he courted by all the poetry in which Sacharissa is celebrated; the name is derived from the Latin appellation of *sugar*, and implies, if it means any thing, a spiritless mildness, and dull good-nature, such as excites rather tenderness than esteem, and such as, though always treated with kindness, is never honoured or admired.

Yet he describes Sacharissa as a sublime predominating beauty, of lofty charms, and imperious

influence, on whom he looks with amazement rather than fondness, whose chains he wishes, though in vain, to break, and whose presence is *wine* that *inflames to madness.*

His acquaintance with this high-born dame gave Wit no opportunity of boasting its influence; she was not to be subdued by the powers of verse, but rejected his addresses, it is said, with disdain, and drove him away to solace his disappointment with Amoret or Phillis. She married in 1639 the Earl of Sunderland, who died at Newberry in the King's cause; and, in her old age, meeting somewhere with Waller, asked him, when he would again write such verses upon her; "When you are as young, Madam," said he, "and as handsome, as you were then."

In this part of his life it was that he was known to Clarendon, among the rest of the men who were eminent in that age for genius and literature; but known so little to his advantage, that they who read his character will not much condemn Sacharissa, that she did not descend from her rank to his embraces, nor think every excellence comprised in wit.

The Lady was, indeed, inexorable; but his uncommon qualifications, though they had no power upon her, recommended him to the scholars and statesmen; and undoubtedly many beauties of that time, however they might receive his love, were proud of his praises. Who they were, whom he dignifies with poetical names, cannot now be known. Amoret, according to Mr. Fenton, was the Lady Sophia Murray. Perhaps by traditions preserved in families more may be discovered.

From the verses written at Penshurst, it has been collected that he diverted his disappointment by a voyage; and his biographers, from his poem on the Whales, think it not improbable that he visited the Bermudas; but it seems much more likely that he should amuse himself with forming an imaginary scene, than that so important an incident, as a visit to America, should have been left floating in conjectural probability.

From his twenty-eighth to his thirty-fifth year, he wrote his pieces on the Reduction of Sallee; on the Reparation of St. Paul's; to the King on his Navy; the panegyrick on the Queen Mother; the two poems to the Earl of Northumberland; and perhaps others, of which the time cannot be discovered.

When he had lost all hopes of Sacharissa, he looked round him for an easier conquest, and gained a lady of the family of Bresse, or Breaux. The time of his marriage is not exactly known. It has not been discovered that this wife was won by his poetry; nor is any thing told of her, but that she brought him many children. He doubtless praised some whom he would have been afraid to marry, and perhaps married one whom he would have been ashamed to praise. Many qualities contribute to domestick happiness, upon which poetry has no colours to bestow; and many airs and sallies may delight imagination, which he who flatters them never can approve. There are charms made only for distant admiration. No spectacle is nobler than a blaze.

Of this wife, his biographers have recorded that she gave him five sons and eight daughters.

During the long interval of parliament, he is represented as living among those with whom it was most honourable to converse, and enjoying an exuberant fortune with that independence and liberty of speech and conduct which wealth ought always to produce. He was however considered as the kinsman of Hampden, and was therefore supposed by the courtiers not to favour them.

When the parliament was called in 1640, it appeared that Waller's political character had not been mistaken. The king's demand of a supply produced one of those noisy speeches which disaffection and discontent regularly dictate; a speech filled with hyperbolical complaints of imaginary grievances: "They," says he, "who think themselves already undone, can never apprehend themselves in danger; and they who have nothing left can never give freely." Political truth is equally in danger from the praises of courtiers, and the exclamations of patriots.

He then proceeds to rail at the clergy, being sure at that time of a favourable audience. His topick is such as will always serve its purpose; an accusation of acting and preaching only for preferment: and he exhorts the Commons *carefully* to *provide* for their *protection against Pulpit Law.*

It always gratifies curiosity to trace a sentiment. Waller has in this speech quoted Hooker in one passage; and in another has copied him, without quoting. "Religion," says Waller, "ought to be the first thing in our purpose and desires; but that which is first in dignity is not always to precede in order of time; for well-being supposes a being; and

the first impediment which men naturally endeavour to remove, is the want of those things without which they cannot subsist. God first assigned unto Adam maintenance of life, and gave him a title to the rest of the creatures before he appointed a law to observe."

"God first assigned Adam," says Hooker, "maintenance of life, and then appointed him a law to observe.—True it is, that the kingdom of God must be the first thing in our purpose and desires; but inasmuch as a righteous life presupposeth life, inasmuch as to live virtuously it is impossible, except we live; therefore the first impediment which naturally we endeavour to remove is penury, and want of things without which we cannot live." B. I. Sect. 9.

The speech is vehement; but the great position, that grievances ought to be redressed before supplies are granted, is agreeable enough to law and reason: nor was Waller, if his biographer may be credited, such an enemy to the King, as not to wish his distresses lightened; for he relates, "that the King sent particularly to Waller, to second his demand of some subsidies to pay off the army; and Sir Henry Vane objecting against first voting a supply, because the King would not accept unless it came up to his proportion, Mr. Waller spoke earnestly to Sir Thomas Jermyn, comptroller of the household, to save his master from the effects of so bold a falsity; 'for,' he said, 'I am but a country gentleman, and cannot pretend to know the King's mind:' but Sir Thomas durst not contradict the secretary; and his son, the Earl of St.

Albans, afterwards told Mr. Waller, that his father's cowardice ruined the King."

In the Long Parliament, which, unhappily for the nation, met Nov. 3, 1640, Waller represented Agmondesham the third time; and was considered by the discontented party as a man sufficiently trusty and acrimonious to be employed in managing the prosecution of Judge Crawley, for his opinion in favour of ship-money; and his speech shews that he did not disappoint their expectations. He was probably the more ardent, as his uncle Hampden had been particularly engaged in the dispute, and, by a sentence which seems generally to be thought unconstitutional, particularly injured.

He was not however a bigot to his party, nor adopted all their opinions. When the great question whether Episcopacy ought to be abolished, was debated, he spoke against the innovation so coolly, so reasonably, and so firmly, that it is not without great injury to his name that his speech, which was as follows, has been hitherto omitted in his works:

* "There is no doubt but the sense of what this nation hath suffered from the present Bishops hath produced these complaints; and the apprehensions men have of suffering the like in time to come, make so many desire the taking away of Episcopacy: but I conceive it is possible that we may not, now, take a right measure of the minds of the people by their petitions; for, when they subscribed them, the Bishops were armed with a dangerous commission of making

* This speech has been retrieved, from a paper printed at that time, by the writers of the Parliamentary History. Dr. J.

new canons, imposing new oaths, and the like; but now we have disarmed them of that power. These petitioners lately did look upon Episcopacy as a beast armed with horns and claws; but now that we have cut and pared them (and may, if we see cause, yet reduce it into narrower bounds), it may, perhaps, be more agreeable. Howsoever, if they be still in passion, it becomes us soberly to consider the right use and antiquity thereof; and not to comply further with a general desire, than may stand with a general good.

"We have already shewed, that Episcopacy and the evils thereof are mingled like water and oil; we have also, in part, severed them; but I believe you will find, that our laws and the present government of the Church are mingled like wine and water; so inseparable, that the abrogation of, at least, a hundred of our laws is desired in these petitions. I have often heard a noble answer of the Lords, commended in this house, to a proposition of like nature, but of less consequence; they gave no other reason of their refusal but this, *Nolumus mutare Leges Angliæ:* it was the Bishops who so answered then; and it would become the dignity and wisdom of this house to answer the people now with a *Nolumus mutare.*

"I see some are moved with a number of hands against the Bishops; which, I confess, rather inclines me to their defence; for I look upon Episcopacy as a counterscarp, or out-work; which, if it be taken by this assault of the people, and, withal, this mystery once revealed, *That we must deny them nothing when they ask it thus in troops,* we

may, in the next place, have as hard a task to defend our property, as we have lately had to recover it from the Prerogative. If, by multiplying hands and petitions, they prevail for an equality in things ecclesiastical, the next demand perhaps may be *Lex Agraria*, the like equality in things temporal.

"The Roman story tells us, That when the people began to flock about the senate, and were more curious to direct and know what was done, than to obey, that Commonwealth soon came to ruin: their *Legem rogare* grew quickly to be a *Legem ferre:* and after, when their legions had found that they could make a Dictator, they never suffered the senate to have a voice any more in such election.

"If these great innovations proceed, I shall expect a flat and level in learning too, as well as in church-preferments: *Honos alit artes.* And though it be true, that grave and pious men do study for learning-sake, and embrace virtue for itself; yet it is as true that youth, which is the season when learning is gotten, is not without ambition; nor will ever take pains to excel in any thing, when there is not some hope of excelling others in reward and dignity.

"There are two reasons chiefly alleged against our church-government.

"First, Scripture, which, as some men think, points out another form.

"Second, The abuses of the present superiors.

"For Scripture, I will not dispute it in this place; but I am confident that, whenever an equal division

of lands and goods shall be desired, there will be as many places in Scripture found out, which seem to favour that, as there are now alleged against the prelacy or preferment in the Church. And, as for abuses, where you are now in the Remonstrance told what this and that poor man hath suffered by the Bishops, you may be presented with a thousand instances of poor men that have received hard measure from their landlords; and of worldly goods abused, to the injury of others, and disadvantage of the owners.

"And therefore, Mr. Speaker, my humble motion is, That we may settle men's minds herein; and, by a question, declare our resolution, *to reform*, that is, *not to abolish, Episcopacy*."

It cannot but be wished that he, who could speak in this manner, had been able to act with spirit and uniformity.

When the Commons began to set the royal authority at open defiance, Waller is said to have withdrawn from the house, and to have returned with the King's permission; and, when the King set up his standard, he sent him a thousand broad-pieces. He continued, however, to sit in the rebellious conventicle; but "spoke," says Clarendon, "with great sharpness and freedom, which, now there was no danger of being outvoted, was not restrained; and therefore used as an argument against those who were gone upon pretence that they were not suffered to deliver their opinion freely in the House, which could not be believed, when all men knew what liberty Mr. Waller took, and spoke every day with

impunity against the sense and proceedings of the house."

Waller, as he continued to sit, was one of the commissioners nominated by the Parliament to treat with the King at Oxford; and when they were presented, the King said to him, "Though you are the last, you are not the lowest nor the least in my favour." Whitlock, who, being another of the commissioners, was witness of this kindness, imputes it to the King's knowledge of the plot, in which Waller appeared afterwards to have been engaged against the Parliament. Fenton, with equal probability, believes that his attempt to promote the royal cause arose from his sensibility of the King's tenderness. Whitlock says nothing of his behaviour at Oxford: he was sent with several others to add pomp to the commission, but was not one of those to whom the trust of treating was imparted.

The engagement, known by the name of Waller's plot, was soon afterwards discovered. Waller had a brother-in-law, Tomkyns, who was clerk of the Queen's council, and at the same time had a very numerous acquaintance, and great influence, in the city. Waller and he, conversing with great confidence, told both their own secrets and those of their friends; and, surveying the wide extent of their conversation, imagined that they found in the majority of all ranks great disapprobation of the violence of the Commons, and unwillingness to continue the war. They knew that many favoured the King, whose fear concealed their loyalty; and many desired peace, though they durst not oppose the clamour for war;

and they imagined that, if those who had these good intentions could be informed of their own strength, and enabled by intelligence to act together, they might overpower the fury of sedition, by refusing to comply with the ordinance for the twentieth part, and the other taxes levied for the support of the rebel army, and by uniting great numbers in a petition for peace. They proceeded with great caution. Three only met in one place, and no man was allowed to impart the plot to more than two others; so that, if any should be suspected or seized, more than three could not be endangered.

Lord Conway joined in the design, and, Clarendon imagines, incidentally mingled, as he was a soldier, some martial hopes or projects, which however were only mentioned, the main design being to bring the loyal inhabitants to the knowledge of each other; for which purpose there was to be appointed one in every district, to distinguish the friends of the King, the adherents to the Parliament, and the neutrals. How far they proceeded does not appear; the result of their enquiry, as Pym declared*, was, that within the walls, for one that was for the Royalists, there were three against them; but that without the walls, for one that was against them, there were five for them. Whether this was said from knowledge or guess, was perhaps never enquired.

It is the opinion of Clarendon, that in Waller's plan no violence or sanguinary resistance was comprised; that he intended only to abate the confidence of the rebels by publick declarations, and to weaken

* Parliamentary History, Vol. XII. Dr. J.

their powers by an opposition to new supplies. This, in calmer times, and more than this, is done without fear; but such was the acrimony of the Commons, that no method of obstructing them was safe.

About this time another design was formed by Sir Nicholas Crispe, a man of loyalty that deserves perpetual remembrance: when he was a merchant in the city, he gave and procured the King, in his exigencies, an hundred thousand pounds; and, when he was driven from the Exchange, raised a regiment, and commanded it.

Sir Nicholas flattered himself with an opinion, that some provocation would so much exasperate, or some opportunity so much encourage, the King's friends in the city, that they would break out in open resistance, and then would want only a lawful standard, and an authorised commander; and extorted from the King, whose judgment too frequently yielded to importunity, a commission of array, directed to such as he thought proper to nominate, which was sent to London by the Lady Aubigney. She knew not what she carried, but was to deliver it on the communication of a certain token which Sir Nicholas imparted.

This commission could be only intended to lie ready till the time should require it. To have attempted to raise any forces, would have been certain destruction; it could be of use only when the forces should appear. This was, however, an act preparatory to martial hostility. Crispe would undoubtedly have put an end to the session of Parliament, had his strength been equal to his zeal: and out of the

design of Crispe, which involved very little danger, and that of Waller, which was an act purely civil, they compounded a horrid and dreadful plot.

The discovery of Waller's design is variously related. In "Clarendon's History" it is told, that a servant of Tomkyns, lurking behind the hangings when his master was in conference with Waller, heard enough to qualify him for an informer, and carried his intelligence to Pym. A manuscript, quoted in the "Life of Waller," relates, that "he was betrayed by his sister Price, and her Presbyterian chaplain Mr. Goode, who stole some of his papers; and, if he had not strangely dreamed the night before, that his sister had betrayed him, and thereupon burnt the rest of his papers by the fire that was in his chimney, he had certainly lost his life by it." The question cannot be decided. It is not unreasonable to believe that the men in power, receiving intelligence from the sister, would employ the servant of Tomkyns to listen at the conference, that they might avoid an act so offensive as that of destroying the brother by the sister's testimony.

The plot was published in the most terrifick manner. On the 31st of May (1643), at a solemn fast, when they were listening to the sermon, a messenger entered the church, and communicated his errand to Pym, who whispered it to others that were placed near him, and then went with them out of the church, leaving the rest in solicitude and amazement. They immediately sent guards to proper places, and that night apprehended Tomkyns and Waller; having yet traced nothing but that letters

had been intercepted, from which it appeared that the Parliament and the city were soon to be delivered into the hands of the cavaliers.

They perhaps yet knew little themselves, beyond some general and indistinct notices. "But Waller," says Clarendon, "was so confounded with fear, that he confessed whatever he had heard, said, thought, or seen; all that he knew of himself, and all that he suspected of others, without concealing any person of what degree or quality soever, or any discourse which he had ever upon any occasion entertained with them; what such and such ladies of great honour, to whom, upon the credit of his wit and great reputation, he had been admitted, had spoke to him in their chambers upon the proceedings in the Houses, and how they had encouraged him to oppose them; what correspondence and intercourse they had with some ministers of state at Oxford, and how they had conveyed all intelligence thither." He accused the Earl of Portland and Lord Conway as co-operating in the transaction; and testified that the Earl of Northumberland had declared himself disposed in favour of any attempt that might check the violence of the Parliament, and reconcile them to the King.

He undoubtedly confessed much which they could never have discovered, and perhaps somewhat which they would wish to have been suppressed; for it is inconvenient, in the conflict of factions, to have that disaffection known which cannot safely be punished.

Tomkyns was seized on the same night with Waller, and appears likewise to have partaken of his

cowardice; for he gave notice of Crispe's commission of array, of which Clarendon never knew how it was discovered. Tomkyns had been sent with the token appointed, to demand it from Lady Aubigney, and had buried it in his garden, where, by his direction, it was dug up; and thus the rebels obtained, what Clarendon confesses them to have had, the original copy.

It can raise no wonder that they formed one plot out of these two designs, however remote from each other, when they saw the same agent employed in both, and found the commission of array in the hands of him who was employed in collecting the opinions and affections of the people.

Of the plot, thus combined, they took care to make the most. They sent Pym among the citizens, to tell them of their imminent danger, and happy escape; and inform them, that the design was, "to seize the Lord Mayor and all the Committee of Militia, and would not spare one of them." They drew up a vow and covenant, to be taken by every member of either House, by which he declared his detestation of all conspiracies against the Parliament, and his resolution to detect and oppose them. They then appointed a day of thanksgiving for this wonderful delivery; which shut out, says Clarendon, all doubts whether there had been such a deliverance, and whether the plot was real or fictitious.

On June 11, the Earl of Portland and Lord Conway were committed, one to the custody of the Mayor, and the other of the Sheriff: but their lands and goods were not seized.

Waller was still to immerse himself deeper in ignominy. The Earl of Portland and Lord Conway denied the charge; and there was no evidence against them but the confession of Waller, of which undoubtedly many would be inclined to question the veracity. With these doubts he was so much terrified, that he endeavoured to persuade Portland to a declaration like his own, by a letter extant in Fenton's edition. "But for me," says he, "you had never known any thing of this business, which was prepared for another; and therefore I cannot imagine why you should hide it so far as to contract your own ruin by concealing it, and persisting unreasonably to hide that truth, which without you already is, and will every day be made more, manifest. Can you imagine yourself bound in honour to keep that secret, which is already revealed by another? or possible it should still be a secret, which is known to one of the other sex?—If you persist to be cruel to yourself for their sakes who deserve it not, it will nevertheless be made appear, ere long, I fear, to your ruin. Surely, if I had the happiness to wait on you, I could move you to compassionate both yourself and me, who, desperate as my case is, am desirous to die with the honour of being known to have declared the truth. You have no reason to contend to hide what is already revealed—inconsiderately to throw away yourself, for the interest of others, to whom you are less obliged than you are aware of."

This persuasion seems to have had little effect. Portland sent (June 29) a letter to the Lords, to tell them, that he "is in custody, as he conceives,

without any charge; and that, by what Mr. Waller hath threatened him with since he was imprisoned, he doth apprehend a very cruel, long, and ruinous restraint:—He therefore prays, that he may not find the effects of Mr. Waller's threats, by a long and close imprisonment; but may be speedily brought to a legal trial, and then he is confident the vanity and falsehood of those informations which have been given against him will appear."

In consequence of this letter, the Lords ordered Portland and Waller to be confronted; when the one repeated his charge, and the other his denial. The examination of the plot being continued (July 1), Thinn, usher of the house of Lords, deposed, that Mr. Waller having had a conference with the Lord Portland in an upper room, Lord Portland said, when he came down, "Do me the favour to tell my Lord Northumberland, that Mr. Waller has extremely pressed me to save my own life and his, by throwing the blame upon the Lord Conway and the Earl of Northumberland."

Waller, in his letter to Portland, tells him of the reasons which he could urge with resistless efficacy in a personal conference; but he over-rated his own oratory; his vehemence, whether of persuasion or entreaty, was returned with contempt.

One of his arguments with Portland is, that the plot is already known to a woman. This woman was doubtless Lady Aubigney, who, upon this occasion, was committed to custody; but who, in reality, when she delivered the commission, knew not what it was.

The Parliament then proceeded against the conspirators, and committed their trial to a council of war. Tomkyns and Chaloner were hanged near their own doors. Tomkyns, when he came to die, said it was a *foolish business;* and indeed there seems to have been no hope that it should escape discovery; for, though never more than three met at a time, yet a design so extensive must, by necessity, be communicated to many, who could not be expected to be all faithful, and all prudent. Chaloner was attended at his execution by Hugh Peters. His crime was, that he had commission to raise money for the King; but it appears not that the money was to be expended upon the advancement of either Crispe or Waller's plot.

The Earl of Northumberland, being too great for prosecution, was only once examined before the Lords. The Earl of Portland and Lord Conway, persisting to deny the charge, and no testimony but Waller's yet appearing against them, were, after a long imprisonment, admitted to bail. Hassel, the King's messenger, who carried the letters to Oxford, died the night before his trial. Hampden escaped death, perhaps by the interest of his family; but was kept in prison to the end of his life. They whose names were inserted in the commission of array were not capitally punished, as it could not be proved that they had consented to their own nomination; but they were considered as malignants, and their estates were seized.

"Waller, though confessedly," says Clarendon, "the most guilty, with incredible dissimulation, affected such a remorse of conscience, that his trial

was put off, out of Christian compassion, till he might recover his understanding." What use he made of this interval, with what liberality and success he distributed flattery and money, and how, when he was brought (July 4.) before the House, he confessed and lamented, and submitted and implored, may be read in the History of the Rebellion (B. vii.) The speech, to which Clarendon ascribes the preservation of his *dear-bought life*, is inserted in his works. The great historian, however, seems to have been mistaken in relating that *he prevailed* in the principal part of his supplication, *not to be tried by a Council of War*; for, according to Whitlock, he was by expulsion from the House abandoned to the tribunal which he so much dreaded, and, being tried and condemned, was reprieved by Essex; but after a year's imprisonment, in which time resentment grew less acrimonious, paying a fine of ten thousand pounds, he was permitted to *recollect himself in another country.*

Of his behaviour in this part of his life, it is not necessary to direct the reader's opinion. "Let us "not," says his last ingenious biographer*, "condemn him with untempered severity, because he was not a prodigy which the world hath seldom seen, because his character included not the poet, the orator, and the hero."

For the place of his exile he chose France, and stayed some time at Roan, where his daughter Margaret was born, who was afterwards his favourite, and

* Life of Waller prefixed to an Edition of his Works, published in 1773, by Percival Stockdale. C.

his amanuensis. He then removed to Paris, where he lived with great splendor and hospitality; and from time to time amused himself with poetry, in which he sometimes speaks of the rebels, and their usurpation, in the natural language of an honest man.

At last it became necessary, for his support, to sell his wife's jewels; and being reduced, as he said, at last *to the rump-jewel*, he solicited from Cromwell permission to return, and obtained it by the interest of colonel Scroop, to whom his sister was married. Upon the remains of a fortune which the danger of his life had very much diminished, he lived at Hallbarn, a house built by himself very near to Beaconsfield, where his mother resided. His mother, though related to Cromwell and Hampden, was zealous for the royal cause, and, when Cromwell visited her, used to reproach him; he, in return, would throw a napkin at her, and say he would not dispute with his aunt; but finding in time that she acted for the King, as well as talked, he made her a prisoner to her own daughter, in her own house. If he would do any thing, he could not do less.

Cromwell, now Protector, received Waller, as his kinsman, to familiar conversation. Waller, as he used to relate, found him sufficiently versed in ancient history; and when any of his enthusiastick friends came to advise or consult him, could sometimes overhear him discoursing in the cant of the times: but, when he returned, he would say, "Cousin Waller, I must talk to these men in their own way:" and resumed the common style of conversation.

He repaid the Protector for his favours (1654) by

the famous Panegyrick, which has been always considered as the first of his poetical productions. His choice of encomiastick topicks is very judicious; for he considers Cromwell in his exaltation, without enquiring how he attained it; there is consequently no mention of the rebel or the regicide. All the former part of his hero's life is veiled with shades; and nothing is brought to view but the chief, the governor, the defender of England's honour, and the enlarger of her dominion. The act of violence by which he obtained the supreme power is lightly treated, and decently justified. It was certainly to be desired that the detestable band should be dissolved, which had destroyed the Church, murdered the King, and filled the nation with tumult and oppression; yet Cromwell had not the right of dissolving them, for all that he had before done could be justified only by supposing them invested with lawful authority. But combinations of wickedness would overwhelm the world by the advantage which licentious principles afford, did not those, who have long practised perfidy, grow faithless to each other.

In the poem on the war with Spain are some passages at least equal to the best parts of the Panegyrick; and in the conclusion the poet ventures yet a higher flight of flattery, by recommending royalty to Cromwell and the nation. Cromwell was very desirous, as appears from his conversation, related by Whitlock, of adding the title to the power of monarchy, and is supposed to have been withheld from it partly by fear of the army, and partly by fear of the laws, which, when he should govern by the name of King, would have restrained his authority. When,

therefore, a deputation was solemnly sent to invite him to the Crown, he, after a long conference, refused it; but is said to have fainted in his coach when he parted from them.

The poem on the death of the Protector seems to have been dictated by real veneration for his memory. Dryden and Sprat wrote on the same occasion; but they were young men, struggling into notice, and hoping for some favour from the ruling party. Waller had little to expect: he had received nothing but his pardon from Cromwell, and was not likely to ask any thing from those who should succeed him.

Soon afterwards, the Restoration supplied him with another subject; and he exerted his imagination, his elegance, and his melody, with equal alacrity, for Charles the Second. It is not possible to read, without some contempt and indignation, poems of the same author, ascribing the highest degree of *power and piety* to Charles the First, then transferring the same *power and piety* to Oliver Cromwell; now inviting Oliver to take the Crown, and then congratulating Charles the Second on his recovered right. Neither Cromwell nor Charles could value his testimony as the effect of conviction, or receive his praises as effusions of reverence; they could consider them but as the labour of invention, and the tribute of dependence.

Poets, indeed, profess fiction; but the legitimate end of fiction is the conveyance of truth; and he that has flattery ready for all whom the vicissitudes of the world happen to exalt, must be scorned as a prostituted mind, that may retain the glitter of wit, but has lost the dignity of virtue.

The Congratulation was considered as inferior in poetical merit to the Panegyrick; and it is reported, that, when the King told Waller of the disparity, he answered, "Poets, Sir, succeed better in fiction than in truth."

The Congratulation is indeed not inferior to the Panegyrick, either by decay of genius, or for want of diligence; but because Cromwell had done much, and Charles had done little. Cromwell wanted nothing to raise him to heroick excellence but virtue; and virtue his poet thought himself at liberty to supply. Charles had yet only the merit of struggling without success, and suffering without despair. A life of escapes and indigence could supply poetry with no splendid images.

In the first Parliament summoned by Charles the Second (March 8, 1661), Waller sat for Hastings in Sussex, and served for different places in all the Parliaments of that reign. In a time when fancy and gaiety were the most powerful recommendations to regard, it is not likely that Waller was forgotten. He passed his time in the company that was highest, both in rank and wit, from which even his obstinate sobriety did not exclude him. Though he drank water, he was enabled by his fertility of mind to heighten the mirth of Bacchanalian assemblies; and Mr. Saville said, that "no man in England should keep him company without drinking, but Ned Waller."

The praise given him by St. Evremond is a proof of his reputation; for it was only by his reputation that he could be known, as a writer, to a man who,

though he lived a great part of a long life upon an English pension, never condescended to understand the language of the nation that maintained him.

In Parliament, "he was," says Burnet, "the delight of the house, and though old said the liveliest things of any among them." This, however, is said in his account of the year seventy-five, when Waller was only seventy. His name as a speaker occurs often in Grey's Collections; but I have found no extracts that can be more quoted as exhibiting sallies of gaiety than cogency of argument.

He was of such consideration, that his remarks were circulated and recorded. When the Duke of York's influence was high, both in Scotland and England, it drew, says Burnet, a lively reflection from Waller the celebrated wit. He said, "the House of Commons had resolved that the Duke should not reign after the King's death; but the King, in opposition to them, had resolved that he should reign even in his life." If there appear no extraordinary *liveliness* in this *remark*, yet its reception proves the speaker to have been a *celebrated wit*, to have had a name which the men of wit were proud of mentioning.

He did not suffer his reputation to die gradually away, which may easily happen in a long life, but renewed his claim to poetical distinction from time to time, as occasions were offered, either by publick events or private incidents; and contenting himself with the influence of his Muse, or loving quiet better than influence, he never accepted any office of magistracy.

He was not, however, without some attention to his fortune; for he asked from the King (in 1665) the provostship of Eton college, and obtained it; but Clarendon refused to put the seal to the grant, alleging that it could be held only by a clergyman. It is known that Sir Henry Wotton qualified himself for it by deacon's orders.

To this opposition the *Biographia* imputes the violence and acrimony with which Waller joined Buckingham's faction in the prosecution of Clarendon. The motive was illiberal and dishonest, and shewed that more than sixty years had not been able to teach him morality. His accusation is such as conscience can hardly be supposed to dictate without the help of malice. "We were to be governed by Janizaries instead of Parliaments, and are in danger from a worse plot than that of the fifth of November; then, if the Lords and Commons had been destroyed, there had been a succession; but here both had been destroyed for ever." This is the language of a man who is glad of an opportunity to rail, and ready to sacrifice truth to interest at one time, and to anger at another.

A year after the Chancellor's banishment, another vacancy gave him encouragement for another petition, which the King referred to the council, who, after hearing the question argued by lawyers for three days, determined that the office could be held only by a clergyman, according to the act of uniformity, since the provosts had always received institution as for a parsonage from the bishops of Lincoln. The King then said, he could not break the law which he had

made; and Dr. Zachary Cradock, famous for a single sermon, at most for two sermons, was chosen by the Fellows.

That he asked any thing else is not known; it is certain that he obtained nothing, though he continued obsequious to the Court through the rest of Charles's reign.

At the accession of King James (in 1685) he was chosen for Parliament, being then fourscore, at Saltash in Cornwall; and wrote a *Presage of the Downfall of the Turkish Empire*, which he presented to the King on his birth-day. It is remarked, by his commentator Fenton, that in reading Tasso he had early imbibed a veneration for the heroes of the Holy War, and a zealous enmity to the Turks, which never left him. James, however, having soon after begun what he thought a Holy War at home, made haste to put all molestation of the Turks out of his power.

James treated him with kindness and familiarity, of which instances are given by the writer of his life. One day taking him into the closet, the King asked him how he liked one of the pictures: "My eyes," said Waller, "are dim, and I do not know it." The King said it was the Princess of Orange. "She is," said Waller, "like the greatest woman in the world." The King asked who was that; and was answered, Queen Elizabeth. "I wonder," said the King, "you should think so; but I must confess she had a wise council." "And, Sir," said Waller, "did you ever know a fool chuse a wise one?" Such is the story, which I once heard of some other man. Pointed axioms, and acute replies, fly loose about the

world, and are assigned successively to those whom it may be the fashion to celebrate.

When the King knew that he was about to marry his daughter to Dr. Birch, a clergyman, he ordered a French gentleman to tell him, that "the King wondered he could think of marrying his daughter to a falling Church." "The King," said Waller, "does me great honour, in taking notice of my domestick affairs; but I have lived long enough to observe that this falling Church has got a trick of rising again."

He took notice to his friends of the King's conduct; and said that "he would be left like a whale upon the strand." Whether he was privy to any of the transactions which ended in the Revolution, is not known. His heir joined the Prince of Orange.

Having now attained an age beyond which the laws of nature seldom suffer life to be extended, otherwise than by a future state, he seems to have turned his mind upon preparation for the decisive hour, and therefore consecrated his poetry to devotion. It is pleasing to discover that his piety was without weakness; that his intellectual powers continued vigorous; and that the lines which he composed when *he, for age, could neither read nor write,* are not inferior to the effusions of his youth.

Towards the decline of life, he bought a small house, with a little land, at Coleshill; and said, "he should be glad to die, like the stag, where he was roused." This, however, did not happen. When he was at Beaconsfield, he found his legs grow tumid: he went to Windsor, where Sir Charles

Scarborough then attended the King, and requested him, as both a friend and a physician, to tell him, *what that swelling meant.* "Sir," answered Scarborough, "your blood will run no longer." Waller repeated some lines of Virgil, and went home to die.

As the disease increased upon him, he composed himself for his departure; and calling upon Dr. Birch to give him the holy sacrament, he desired his children to take it with him, and made an earnest declaration of his faith in Christianity. It now appeared what part of his conversation with the Great could be remembered with delight. He related, that being present when the Duke of Buckingham talked profanely before King Charles, he said to him, "My Lord, I am a great deal older than your Grace, and have, I believe, heard more arguments for Atheism than ever your Grace did; but I have lived long enough to see there is nothing in them; and so, I hope, your Grace will."

He died October 21, 1687, and was buried at Beaconsfield, with a monument erected by his son's executors, for which Rymer wrote the inscription, and which I hope is now rescued from dilapidation.

He left several children by his second wife; of whom, his daughter was married to Dr. Birch. Benjamin, the eldest son, was disinherited, and sent to New Jersey, as wanting common understanding. Edmund, the second son, inherited the estate, and represented Agmondesham in Parliament, but at last turned Quaker. William, the third son, was a

merchant in London. Stephen, the fourth, was an eminent Doctor of Laws, and one of the Commissioners for the Union. There is said to have been a fifth, of whom no account has descended.

The character of Waller, both moral and intellectual, has been drawn by Clarendon, to whom he was familiarly known, with nicety, which certainly none to whom he was not known can presume to emulate. It is therefore inserted here, with such remarks as others have supplied; after which, nothing remains but a critical examination of his poetry.

"Edmund Waller," says Clarendon, "was born to a very fair estate, by the parsimony, or frugality, of a wise father and mother: and he thought it so commendable an advantage, that he resolved to improve it with his utmost care, upon which in his nature he was too much intent; and, in order to that, he was so much reserved and retired, that he was scarce ever heard of, till by his address and dexterity he had gotten a very rich wife in the city, against all the recommendation and countenance and authority of the Court, which was thoroughly engaged on the behalf of Mr. Crofts, and which used to be successful, in that age, against any opposition. He had the good fortune to have an alliance and friendship with Dr. Morley, who had assisted and instructed him in the reading many good books, to which his natural parts and promptitude inclined him, especially the poets; and at the age when other men used to give over writing verses (for he was near thirty years when

he first engaged himself in that exercise, at least that he was known to do so), he surprised the town with two or three pieces of that kind; as if a tenth Muse had been newly born to cherish drooping poetry. The Doctor at that time brought him into that company which was most celebrated for good conversation; where he was received and esteemed with great applause and respect. He was a very pleasant discourser, in earnest and in jest, and therefore very grateful to all kind of company, where he was not the less esteemed for being very rich.

"He had been even nursed in parliaments, where he sat when he was very young; and so, when they were resumed again (after a long intermission), he appeared in those assemblies with great advantage; having a graceful way of speaking, and by thinking much on several arguments (which his temper and complexion, that had much of melancholick, inclined him to), he seemed often to speak upon the sudden, when the occasion had only administered the opportunity of saying what he had thoroughly considered, which gave a great lustre to all he said; which yet was rather of delight than weight. There needs no more be said to extol the excellence and power of his wit, and pleasantness of his conversation, than that it was of magnitude enough to cover a world of very great faults; that is, so to cover them, that they were not taken notice of to his reproach; *viz.* a narrowness in his nature to the lowest degree; an abjectness and want of courage to support him in any virtuous

undertaking; an insinuation and servile flattery to the height, the vainest and most imperious nature could be contented with;—that it preserved and won his life from those who were most resolved to take it, and in an occasion in which he ought to have been ambitious to have lost it; and then preserved him again from the reproach and contempt that was due to him for so preserving it, and for vindicating it at such a price; that it had power to reconcile him to those whom he had most offended and provoked; and continued to his age with that rare felicity, that his company was acceptable where his spirit was odious; and he was at least pitied where he was most detested."

Such is the account of Clarendon; on which it may not be improper to make some remarks.

"He was very little known till he had obtained a rich wife in the city."

He obtained a rich wife about the age of three-and-twenty; an age before which few men are conspicuous much to their advantage. He was known, however, in Parliament and at Court; and, if he spent part of his time in privacy, it is not unreasonable to suppose, that he endeavoured the improvement of his mind as well as of his fortune.

That Clarendon might misjudge the motive of his retirement is the more probable, because he has evidently mistaken the commencement of his poetry, which he supposes him not to have attempted before thirty. As his first pieces were perhaps not printed, the succession of his compositions was not known; and Clarendon, who cannot be imagined to have

been very studious of poetry, did not rectify his first opinion by consulting Waller's book.

Clarendon observes, that he was introduced to the wits of the age by Dr. Morley; but the writer of his life relates that he was already among them, when, hearing a noise in the street, and enquiring the cause, they found a son of Ben Jonson under an arrest. This was Morley, whom Waller set free at the expence of one hundred pounds, took him into the country as director of his studies, and then procured him admission into the company of the friends of literature. Of this fact Clarendon had a nearer knowledge than the biographer, and is therefore more to be credited.

The account of Waller's parliamentary eloquence is seconded by Burnet, who, though he calls him "the delight of the House," adds, that "he was only concerned to say that which should make him be applauded, he never laid the business of the House to heart, being a vain and empty, though a witty man."

Of his insinuation and flattery it is not unreasonable to believe that the truth is told. Ascham, in his elegant description of those whom in modern language we term Wits, says, that they are *open flatterers, and privy mockers.* Waller shewed a little of both, when, upon sight of the Dutchess of Newcastle's verses on the Death of a Stag, he declared that he would give all his own compositions to have written them; and, being charged with the exorbitance of his adulation, answered, that "nothing was too much to be given, that a lady might be saved

from the disgrace of such a vile performance." This, however, was no very mischievous or very unusual deviation from truth: had his hypocrisy been confined to such transactions, he might have been forgiven, though not praised; for who forbears to flatter an author or a lady?

Of the laxity of his political principles, and the weakness of his resolution, he experienced the natural effect, by losing the esteem of every party. From Cromwell he had only his recall; and from Charles the Second, who delighted in his company, he obtained only the pardon of his relation Hampden, and the safety of Hampden's son.

As far as conjecture can be made from the whole of his writing, and his conduct, he was habitually and deliberately a friend to monarchy. His deviation towards democracy proceeded from his connection with Hampden, for whose sake he prosecuted Crawley with great bitterness; and the invective which he pronounced on that occasion was so popular, that twenty thousand copies are said by his biographer to have been sold in one day.

It is confessed that his faults still left him many friends, at least many companions. His convivial power of pleasing is universally acknowledged; but those who conversed with him intimately, found him not only passionate, especially in his old age, but resentful; so that the interposition of friends was sometimes necessary.

His wit and his poetry naturally connected him with the polite writers of his time: he was joined with Lord Buckhurst in the translation of Corneille's

Pompey; and is said to have added his help to that of Cowley in the original draught of the Rehearsal.

The care of his fortune, which Clarendon imputes to him in a degree little less than criminal, was either not constant or not successful; for, having inherited a patrimony of three thousand five hundred pounds a year in the time of James the First, and augmented it at least by one wealthy marriage, he left, about the time of the Revolution, an income of not more than twelve or thirteen hundred; which, when the different value of money is reckoned, will be found perhaps not more than a fourth part of what he once possessed.

Of this diminution, part was the consequence of the gifts which he was forced to scatter, and the fine which he was condemned to pay at the detection of his plot; and if his estate, as is related in his Life, was sequestered, he had probably contracted debts when he lived in exile; for we are told, that at Paris he lived in splendor, and was the only Englishman, except the Lord St. Albans, that kept a table.

His unlucky plot compelled him to sell a thousand a year; of the waste of the rest there is no account, except that he is confessed by his biographer to have been a bad œconomist. He seems to have deviated from the common practice; to have been a hoarder in his first years, and a squanderer in his last.

Of his course of studies, or choice of books, nothing is known more than that he professed himself unable to read Chapman's translation of Homer without rapture. His opinion concerning the duty of a poet is contained in his declaration, that "he would blot

from his works any line that did not contain some motive to virtue."

THE characters, by which Waller intended to distinguish his writings, are spriteliness and dignity; in his smaller pieces, he endeavours to be gay; in the larger, to be great. Of his airy and light productions, the chief source is gallantry, that attentive reverence of female excellence which has descended to us from the Gothic ages. As his poems are commonly occasional, and his addresses personal, he was not so liberally supplied with grand as with soft images; for beauty is more easily found than magnanimity.

The delicacy which he cultivated, restrains him to a certain nicety and caution, even when he writes upon the slightest matter. He has, therefore, in his whole volume, nothing burlesque, and seldom any thing ludicrous or familiar. He seems always to do his best; though his subjects are often unworthy of his care. It is not easy to think without some contempt on an author who is growing illustrious in his own opinion by verses, at one time, "To a Lady who can do any thing but sleep when she pleases;" at another, "To a Lady who can sleep when she pleases;" now, "To a Lady on her passing through a crowd of people;" then, "On a braid of divers colours woven by four fair Ladies;" "On a tree cut in paper;" or, "To a Lady, from whom he received the copy of verses on the paper-tree, which for many years had been missing."

Genius now and then produces a lucky trifle. We still read the *Dove* of Anacreon, and *Sparrow* of

Catullus; and a writer naturally pleases himself with a performance, which owes nothing to the subject. But compositions merely pretty have the fate of other pretty things, and are quitted in time for something useful: they are flowers fragrant and fair, but of short duration; or they are blossoms to be valued only as they foretell fruits.

Among Waller's little poems are some which their excellency ought to secure from oblivion; as, *To Amoret*, comparing the different modes of regard with which he looks on her and *Sacharissa;* and the verses *On Love*, that begin, *Anger in hasty words or blows.*

In others he is not equally successful; sometimes his thoughts are deficient, and sometimes his expression.

The numbers are not always musical; as,

Fair Venus, in thy soft arms
The god of rage confine:
For thy whispers are the charms
Which only can divert his fierce design.
What though he frown, and to tumult do incline;
Thou the flame
Kindled in his breast canst tame
With that snow which unmelted lies on thine.

He seldom indeed fetches an amorous sentiment from the depths of science; his thoughts are for the most part easily understood, and his images such as the superficies of nature readily supplies; he has a just claim to popularity, because he writes to common degrees of knowledge; and is free at least from philosophical pedantry, unless perhaps the end of a song *to the Sun* may be excepted, in which he is too much a Copernican. To which may be added,

the simile of the *Palm* in the verses *on her passing through a crowd;* and a line in a more serious poem on the *Restoration,* about vipers and treacle, which can only be understood by those who happen to know the composition of the *Theriaca.*

His thoughts are sometimes hyperbolical, and his images unnatural:

—The plants admire,
No less than those of old did Orpheus' lyre:
If she sit down, with tops all tow'rds her bow'd,
They round about her into arbours crowd:
Or if she walks, in even ranks they stand,
Like some well-marshal'd and obsequious band.

In another place:

While in the park I sing, the listening deer
Attend my passion, and forget to fear:
When to the beeches I report my flame,
They bow their heads, as if they felt the same:
To gods appealing, when I reach their bowers,
With loud complaints they answer me in showers.
To thee a wild and cruel soul is given,
More deaf than trees, and prouder than the Heaven!

On the head of a stag:

O fertile head! which every year
Could such a crop of wonder bear!
The teeming Earth did never bring,
So soon, so hard, so huge a thing:
Which might it never have been cast,
Each year's growth added to the last,
These lofty branches had supply'd
The Earth's bold son's prodigious pride:
Heaven with these engines had been scal'd,
When mountains heap'd on mountains fail'd.

Sometimes, having succeeded in the first part, he makes a feeble conclusion. In the song of "Sacharissa's and Amoret's Friendship," the two last stanzas ought to have been omitted.

His images of gallantry are not always in the highest degree delicate.

> Then shall my love this doubt displace,
> And gain such trust, that I may come
> And banquet sometimes on thy face,
> But make my constant meals at home.

Some applications may be thought too remote and unconsequential; as in the verses on the *Lady Dancing:*

> The sun in figures such as these
> Joys with the moon to play:
> To the sweet strains they advance,
> Which do result from their own spheres;
> As this nymph's dance
> Moves with the numbers which she hears.

Sometimes a thought, which might perhaps fill a distich, is expanded and attenuated till it grows weak and almost evanescent.

> Chloris! since first our calm of peace
> Was frighted hence, this good we find,
> Your favours with your fears increase,
> And growing mischiefs make you kind.
> So the fair tree, which still preserves
> Her fruit, and state, while no wind blows,
> In storms from that uprightness swerves;
> And the glad earth about her strows
> With treasure from her yielding boughs.

His images are not always distinct; as, in the following passage, he confounds *Love* as a person with *Love* as a passion:

> Some other nymphs, with colours faint,
> And pencil slow, may Cupid paint,
> And a weak heart in time destroy;
> She has a stamp, and prints the Boy:
> Can, with a single look, inflame
> The coldest breast, the rudest tame.

His sallies of casual flattery are sometimes elegant and happy, as that *in return for the Silver Pen;* and sometimes empty and trifling, as that *upon the Card torn by the Queen.* There are a few lines *written in the Dutchess's Tasso,* which he is said by Fenton to have kept a summer under correction. It happened to Waller, as to others, that his success was not always in proportion to his labour.

Of these petty compositions, neither the beauties nor the faults deserve much attention. The amorous verses have this to recommend them, that they are less hyperbolical than those of some other poets. Waller is not always at the last gasp; he does not die of a frown, nor live upon a smile. There is, however, too much love, and too many trifles. Little things are made too important; and the Empire of Beauty is represented as exerting its influence further than can be allowed by the multiplicity of human passions, and the variety of human wants. Such books, therefore, may be considered as shewing the world under a false appearance, and, so far as they obtain credit from the young and unexperienced, as misleading expectation, and misguiding practice.

Of his nobler and more weighty performances, the greater part is panegyrical: for of praise he was very lavish, as is observed by his imitator, Lord Lansdowne:

> No satyr stalks within the hallow'd ground,
> But queens and heroines, kings and gods abound;
> Glory and arms and love are all the sound.

In the first poem, on the danger of the Prince on the coast of Spain, there is a puerile and ridiculous mention of Arion at the beginning; and the last paragraph, on the *Cable*, is in part ridiculously mean, and in part ridiculously tumid. The poem, however, is such as may be justly praised, without much allowance for the state of our poetry and language at that time.

The two next poems are upon the King's *behaviour at the death of Buckingham*, and upon his *Navy*.

He has, in the first, used the Pagan deities with great propriety:

> 'Twas want of such a precedent as this,
> Made the old Heathen frame their gods amiss.

In the poem on the Navy, those lines are very noble, which suppose the King's power secure against a second Deluge; so noble, that it were almost criminal to remark the mistake of *centre* for *surface*, or to say that the empire of the sea would be worth little if it were not that the waters terminate in land.

The poem upon *Sallée* has forcible sentiments; but the conclusion is feeble. That on the *Repairs of St. Paul's* has something vulgar and obvious; such

as the mention of Amphion; and something violent and harsh; as,

> So all our minds with his conspire to grace
> The Gentiles' great apostle, and deface
> Those state-obscuring sheds, that like a chain
> Seem'd to confine, and fetter him again:
> Which the glad saint shakes off at his command,
> As once the viper from his sacred hand.
> So joys the aged oak, when we divide
> The creeping ivy from his injur'd side.

Of the two last couplets, the first is extravagant, and the second mean.

His praise of the Queen is too much exaggerated; and the thought, that she "saves lovers, by cutting off hope, as gangrenes are cured by lopping the limb," presents nothing to the mind but disgust and horror.

Of the *Battle of the Summer Islands*, it seems not easy to say whether it is intended to raise terror or merriment. The beginning is too splendid for jest, and the conclusion too light for seriousness. The versification is studied, the scenes are diligently displayed, and the images artfully amplified; but, as it ends neither in joy nor sorrow, it will scarcely be read a second time.

The *Panegyrick* upon Cromwell has obtained from the publick a very liberal dividend of praise, which however cannot be said to have been unjustly lavished; for such a series of verses had rarely appeared before in the English language. Of the lines some are grand, some are graceful, and all are musical. There is now and then a feeble

verse, or a trifling thought; but its great fault is the choice of its hero.

The poem of *The War with Spain* begins with lines more vigorous and striking than Waller is accustomed to produce. The succeeding parts are variegated with better passages and worse. There is something too far-fetched in the comparison of the Spaniards drawing the English on, by saluting St. Lucar with cannon, *to lambs awakening the lion by bleating*. The fate of the Marquis and his Lady, who were burnt in their ship, would have moved more, had the poet not made him die like the Phœnix, because he had spices about him, nor expressed their affection and their end by a conceit at once false and vulgar:

> Alive, in equal flames of love they burn'd,
> And now together are to ashes turn'd.

The verses to Charles on his Return were doubtless intended to counterbalance the Panegyrick on Cromwell. If it has been thought inferior to that with which it is naturally compared, the cause of its deficience has been already remarked.

The remaining pieces it is not necessary to examine singly. They must be supposed to have faults and beauties of the same kind with the rest. The Sacred Poems, however, deserve particular regard; they were the work of Waller's declining life, of those hours in which he looked upon the fame and the folly of the time past with the sentiments which his great predecessor Petrarch bequeathed to posterity, upon his review of that love and poetry which have given him immortality.

That natural jealousy which makes every man unwilling to allow much excellence in another, always produces a disposition to believe that the mind grows old with the body; and that he, whom we are now forced to confess superior, is hastening daily to a level with ourselves. By delighting to think this of the living, we learn to think it of the dead; and Fenton, with all his kindness for Waller, has the luck to mark the exact time when his genius passed the zenith, which he places at his fifty-fifth year. This is to allot the mind but a small portion. Intellectual decay is doubtless not uncommon; but it seems not to be universal. Newton was in his eighty-fifth year improving his Chronology, a few days before his death; and Waller appears not, in my opinion, to have lost at eighty-two any part of his poetical power.

His Sacred Poems do not please like some of his other works; but before the fatal fifty-five, had he written on the same subjects, his success would hardly have been better.

It has been the frequent lamentation of good men, that verse has been too little applied to the purposes of worship, and many attempts have been made to animate devotion by pious poetry. That they have very seldom attained their end is sufficiently known, and it may not be improper to enquire why they have miscarried.

Let no pious ear be offended if I advance, in opposition to many authorities, that poetical devotion cannot often please. The doctrines of Religion may indeed be defended in a didactick poem; and he who has the happy power of arguing in verse, will

not lose it because his subject is sacred. A poet may describe the beauty and the grandeur of Nature, the flowers of the Spring, and the harvests of Autumn, the vicissitudes of the Tide, and the revolutions of the Sky, and praise the Maker for his works in lines which no reader shall lay aside. The subject of the disputation is not piety, but the motives to piety; that of the description is not God, but the works of God.

Contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical. Man, admitted to implore the mercy of his Creator, and plead the merits of his Redeemer, is already in a higher state than poetry can confer.

The essence of poetry is invention; such invention as, by producing something unexpected, surprises and delights. The topicks of devotion are few, and being few are universally known; but, few as they are, they can be made no more; they can receive no grace from novelty of sentiment, and very little from novelty of expression.

Poetry pleases by exhibiting an idea more grateful to the mind than things themselves afford. This effect proceeds from the display of those parts of nature which attract, and the concealment of those which repel the imagination: but religion must be shewn as it is; suppression and addition equally corrupt it; and such as it is, it is known already.

From poetry the reader justly expects, and from good poetry always obtains, the enlargement of his comprehension and elevation of his fancy; but this is rarely to be hoped by Christians from metrical devotion. Whatever is great, desirable, or tremen-

dous, is comprised in the name of the Supreme Being. Omnipotence cannot be exalted; Infinity cannot be amplified; Perfection cannot be improved.

The employments of pious meditation are Faith, Thanksgiving, Repentance, and Supplication. Faith, invariably uniform, cannot be invested by fancy with decorations. Thanksgiving, the most joyful of all holy effusions, yet addressed to a Being without passions, is confined to a few modes, and is to be felt rather than expressed. Repentance, trembling in the presence of the judge, is not at leisure for cadences and epithets. Supplication of man to man may diffuse itself through many topicks of persuasion; but supplication to God can only cry for mercy.

Of sentiments purely religious, it will be found that the most simple expression is the most sublime. Poetry loses its lustre and its power, because it is applied to the decoration of something more excellent than itself. All that pious verse can do is to help the memory, and delight the ear, and for these purposes it may be very useful; but it supplies nothing to the mind. The ideas of Christian Theology are too simple for eloquence, too sacred for fiction, and too majestick for ornament; to recommend them by tropes and figures, is to magnify by a concave mirror the sidereal hemisphere.

As much of Waller's reputation was owing to the softness and smoothness of his numbers; it is proper to consider those minute particulars to which a versifier must attend.

He certainly very much excelled in smoothness most of the writers who were living when his poetry

commenced. The Poets of Elizabeth had attained an art of modulation, which was afterwards neglected or forgotten. Fairfax was acknowledged by him as his model; and he might have studied with advantage the poem of Davies*, which, though merely philosophical, yet seldom leaves the ear ungratified.

But he was rather smooth than strong; of *the full resounding line*, which Pope attributes to Dryden, he has given very few examples. The critical decision has given the praise of strength to Denham, and of sweetness to Waller.

His excellence of versification has some abatements. He uses the expletive *do* very frequently; and, though he lived to see it almost universally ejected, was not more careful to avoid it in his last compositions than in his first. Praise had given him confidence; and finding the world satisfied, he satisfied himself.

His rhymes are sometimes weak words: *so* is found to make the rhyme twice in ten lines, and occurs often as a rhyme through his book.

His double rhymes, in heroick verse, have been censured by Mrs. Phillips, who was his rival in the translation of Corneille's Pompey; and more faults might be found, were not the enquiry below attention.

He sometimes uses the obsolete termination of verbs, as *waxeth, affecteth;* and sometimes retains the final syllable of the preterite, as *amazed, sup-*

* Sir John Davies, intituled, "Nosce teipsum. This Oracle expounded in two Elegies; I. Of Humane Knowledge: II. Of the Soule of Man and the Immortalitie thereof. 1599." R.

posed, of which I know not whether it is not to the detriment of our language that we have totally rejected them.

Of triplets he is sparing; but he did not wholly forbear them: of an Alexandrine he has given no example.

The general character of his poetry is elegance and gaiety. He is never pathetick, and very rarely sublime. He seems neither to have had a mind much elevated by nature, nor amplified by learning. His thoughts are such as a liberal conversation and large acquaintance with life would easily supply. They had however then, perhaps, that grace of novelty which they are now often supposed to want by those who, having already found them in later books, do not know or enquire who produced them first. This treatment is unjust. Let not the original author lose by his imitators.

Praise, however, should be due before it is given. The author of Waller's Life ascribes to him the first practice of what Erythræus and some late criticks call *Alliteration*, of using in the same verse many words beginning with the same letter. But this knack, whatever be its value, was so frequent among early writers, that Gascoigne, a writer of the sixteenth century, warns the young poet against affecting it; Shakspeare, in the Midsummer Night's Dream, is supposed to ridicule it; and in another play the sonnet of Holofernes fully displays it.

He borrows too many of his sentiments and illustrations from the old Mythology, for which it is vain to plead the example of ancient poets: the deities

which they introduced so frequently, were considered as realities, so far as to be received by the imagination, whatever sober reason might even then determine. But of these images time has tarnished the splendor. A fiction, not only detected but despised, can never afford a solid basis to any position, though sometimes it may furnish a transient allusion, or slight illustration. No modern monarch can be much exalted by hearing that, as Hercules had had his *club*, he has his *navy*.

But of the praise of Waller, though much may be taken away, much will remain; for it cannot be denied that he added something to our elegance of diction, and something to our propriety of thought; and to him may be applied what Tasso said, with equal spirit and justice, of himself and Guarini, when, having perused the *Pastor Fido*, he cried out, "If he had not read *Aminta*, he had never excelled it."

As Waller professed himself to have learned the art of versification from Fairfax, it has been thought proper to subjoin a specimen of his work, which, after Mr. Hoole's translation, will perhaps not be soon reprinted. By knowing the state in which Waller found our poetry, the reader may judge how much he improved it.

1.

Erminia's steed (this while) his mistresse bore
Through forrests thicke among the shadie treene,
Her feeble hand the bridle raines forlore,
Halfe in a swoune she was for feare I weene;
But her flit courser spared nere the more,
To beare her through the desart woods unseene
Of her strong foes, that chas'd her through the plaine,
And still pursu'd, but still pursu'd in vaine.

2.

Like as the wearie hounds at last retire,
Windlesse, displeased, from the fruitlesse chace,
When the slie beast Tapisht in bush and brire,
No art nor paines can rowse out of his place:
The Christian knights so full of shame and ire
Returned backe, with faint and wearie pace!
Yet still the fearefull Dame fled, swift as winde,
Nor euer staid, nor euer lookt behinde.

3.

Through thicke and thinne, all night, all day, she driued,
Withouten comfort, companie or guide,
Her plaints and teares with euery thought reuiued,
She heard and saw her greefes, but nought beside.
But when the sunne his burning chariot diued
In Thetis waue, and wearie teame vntide,
On Iordans sandie banks her course she staid,
At last, there downe she light, and downe she laid.

4.

Her teares, her drinke; her food, her sorrowings,
This was her diet that vnhappie night:
But sleepe (that sweet repose and quiet brings)
To ease the greefes of discontented wight,
Spred foorth his tender, soft, and nimble wings,
In his dull armes foulding the virgin bright;
And loue, his mother, and the graces kept
Strong watch and warde, while this faire Ladie slept.

5.

The birds awakte her with their morning song,
Their warbling musicke pearst her tender eare,
The murmuring brookes and whistling windes among
The ratling boughes, and leaues, their parts did beare;
Her eies vnclos'd beheld the groues along
Of swaines and shepherd groomes, that dwellings weare;
And that sweet noise, birds, winds, and waters sent,
Prouokte againe the virgin to lament.

6.

Her plaints were interrupted with a sound,
That seem'd from thickest bushes to proceed,
Some iolly shepherd sung a lustie round,
And to his voice had tun'd his oaten reed;
Thither she went, an old man there she found,
(At whose right hand his little flock did feed)
Sat making baskets, his three sonnes among,
That learn'd their father's art, and learn'd his song.

7.

Beholding one in shining armes appeare,
The seelie man and his were sore dismaid;
But sweet Erminia comforted their feare,
Her ventall vp, her visage open laid,
You happie folke, of heau'n beloued deare,
Work on (quoth she) vpon your harmlesse traid,
These dreadfull armes I beare no warfare bring
To your sweet toile, nor those sweet tunes you sing.

8.

But father, since this land, these townes and towres,
Destroied are with sword, with fire and spoile,
How may it be unhurt, that you and yours
In safetie thus, applie your harmlesse toile?
My sonne (quoth he) this pore estate of ours
Is euer safe from storme of warlike broile;
This wildernesse doth vs in safetie keepe,
No thundring drum, no trumpet breakes our sleepe.

9.

Haply iust heau'ns defence and shield of right,
Doth loue the innocence of simple swains,
The thunderbolts on highest mountains light,
And seld or neuer strike the lower plaines:
So kings haue cause to feare Bellonaes might,
Not they whose sweat and toile their dinner gaines,
Nor ever greedie soldier was entised
By pouertie, neglected and despised.

10.

O Pouertie, chefe of the heau'nly brood,
Dearer to me than wealth or kingly crowne!
No wish for honour, thirst of other's good,
Can moue my hart, contented with my owne:
We quench our thirst with water of this flood,
Nor fear we poison should therein be throwne:
These little flocks of sheepe and tender goates
Giue milke for food, and wooll to make us coates.

11.

We little wish, we need but little wealth,
From cold and hunger vs to cloath and feed;
These are my sonnes, their care preserues from stealth
Their father's flocks, nor servants moe I need:
Amid these groues I walke oft for my health,
And to the fishes, birds, and beastes giue heed,
How they are fed, in forrest, spring and lake,
And their contentment for ensample take.

12.

Time was (for each one hath hi
These siluer locks were golden
That countrie life I hated as a c
And from the forrests sweet co
To Memphis stately pallace wo
And there became the mightie
And though I but a simple g
Yet could I marke abuses, s

13.

Entised on with hope of future
I suffred long what did my soul
But when my youth was spent,
I felt my native strength at las
I gan my losse of lustie yeeres
And wisht I had enjoy'd the c
I bod the court farewell, an
My later age here have I q

14.

While thus he spake, Erminia
His wise discourses heard, with
His speeches graue those idle
Which in her troubled soule b
After much thought reformed
Within those woods to dwell
Till fortune should occasion
To turne her home to her d

15.

She said therefore, O shepherd
That troubles some didst whil
Yet liuest now in this contente
Let my mishap thy thoughts t
To entertaine me as a willing
In shepherds life, which I adn
Within these pleasant grou
Of her discomforts may vnl

16.

If gold or wealth of most esteemed deare,
If iewels rich, thou diddest hold in prise,
Such store thereof, such plentie have I seen,
As to a greedie minde might well suffice:
With that downe trickled many a siluer teare,
Two christall streames fell from her watrie eies;
Part of her sad misfortunes than she told,
And wept, and with her wept that shepherd old.

17.

With speeches kinde, he gan the virgin deare
Towards his cottage gently home to guide;
His aged wife there made her homely cheare,
Yet welcomde her, and plast her by her side.
The Princesse dond a poore pastoraes geare,
A kerchiefe course vpon her head she tide;
But yet her gestures and her lookes (I gesse)
Were such as ill beseem'd a shepherdesse.

18.

Not those rude garments could obscure, and hide
The heau'nly beautie of her angels face,
Nor was her princely ofspring damnifide,
Or ought disparag'de, by those labours bace;
Her little flocks to pasture would she guide,
And milke her goates, and in their folds them place,
Both cheese and butter could she make, and frame
Her selfe to please the shepherd and his dame.

POMFRET.

Of Mr. John Pomfret nothing is known but from a slight and confused account prefixed to his poems by a nameless friend; who relates, that he was the son of the Rev. Mr. Pomfret, rector of Luton, in Bedfordshire; that he was bred at Cambridge*, entered into orders, and was rector of Malden in Bedfordshire, and might have risen in the Church; but that, when he applied to Dr. Compton, bishop of London, for institution to a living of considerable value, to which he had been presented, he found a troublesome obstruction raised by a malicious interpretation of some passage in his *Choice;* from which it was inferred, that he considered happiness as more likely to be found in the company of a mistress than of a wife.

This reproach was easily obliterated: for it had happened to Pomfret as to almost all other men who plan schemes of life; he had departed from his purpose, and was then married.

* He was of Queen's College there, and, by the University-register, appears to have taken his Bachelor's degree in 1684, and his Master's 1698. H.—His Father was of Trinity. C.

The malice of his enemies had however a very fatal consequence: the delay constrained his attendance in London, where he caught the small-pox, and died in 1703, in the thirty-sixth year of his age.

He published his poems in 1699; and has been always the favourite of that class of readers, who, without vanity or criticism, seek only their own amusement.

His *Choice* exhibits a system of life adapted to common notions, and equal to common expectations; such a state as affords plenty and tranquillity, without exclusion of intellectual pleasures. Perhaps no composition in our language has been oftener perused than Pomfret's *Choice*.

In his other poems there is an easy volubility; the pleasure of smooth metre is afforded to the ear, and the mind is not oppressed with ponderous or entangled with intricate sentiment. He pleases many; and he who pleases many must have some species of merit.

DORSET.

Of the Earl of Dorset the character has been drawn so largely and so elegantly by Prior, to whom he was familiarly known, that nothing can be added by a casual hand; and, as its author is so generally read, it would be useless officiousness to transcribe it.

Charles Sackville was born January 24, 1637. Having been educated under a private tutor, he travelled into Italy, and returned a little before the Restoration. He was chosen into the first parliament that was called, for East Grinstead in Sussex, and soon became a favourite of Charles the Second; but undertook no publick employment, being too eager of the riotous and licentious pleasures which young men of high rank, who aspired to be thought Wits, at that time imagined themselves intitled to indulge.

One of these frolicks has, by the industry of Wood, come down to posterity. Sackville, who was then Lord Buckhurst, with Sir Charles Sedley and Sir Thomas Ogle, got drunk at the Cock in Bow-street, by Covent-garden, and, going into the balcony, exposed themselves to the populace in very indecent

postures. At last, as they grew warmer, Sedley stood forth naked, and harangued the populace in such profane language, that the public indignation was awakened: the crowd attempted to force the door, and, being repulsed, drove in the performers with stones, and broke the windows of the house.

For this misdemeanour they were indicted, and Sedley was fined five hundred pounds: what was the sentence of the others is not known. Sedley employed Killigrew and another to procure a remission from the King; but (mark the friendship of the dissolute!) they begged the fine for themselves, and exacted it to the last groat.

In 1665, Lord Buckhurst attended the Duke of York as a volunteer in the Dutch war; and was in the battle of June 3, when eighteen great Dutch ships were taken, fourteen others were destroyed, and Opdam the admiral, who engaged the Duke, was blown up beside him, with all his crew.

On the day before the battle, he is said to have composed the celebrated song, *To all you Ladies now at land*, with equal tranquillity of mind and promptitude of wit. Seldom any splendid story is wholly true. I have heard from the late Earl of Orrery, who was likely to have good hereditary intelligence, that Lord Buckhurst had been a week employed upon it, and only retouched or finished it on the memorable evening. But even this, whatever it may subtract from his facility, leaves him his courage.

He was soon after made a gentleman of the bedchamber, and sent on short embassies to France.

In 1674, the estate of his uncle James Cranfield, Earl of Middlesex, came to him by its owner's death, and the title was conferred on him the year after. In 1677, he became, by the death of his father, Earl of Dorset, and inherited the estate of his family.

In 1684, having buried his first wife, of the family of Bagot, who left him no child, he married a daughter of the Earl of Northampton, celebrated both for beauty and understanding.

He received some favourable notice from King James; but soon found it necessary to oppose the violence of his innovations, and with some other lords appeared in Westminster-hall to countenance the bishops at their trial.

As enormities grew every day less supportable, he found it necessary to concur in the Revolution. He was one of those lords who sat every day in council to preserve the publick peace, after the King's departure; and, what is not the most illustrious action of his life, was employed to conduct the Princess Anne to Nottingham with a guard, such as might alarm the populace, as they passed, with false apprehensions of her danger. Whatever end may be designed, there is always something despicable in a trick.

He became, as may be easily supposed, a favourite of King William, who, the day after his accession, made him lord chamberlain of the household, and gave him afterwards the garter. He happened to be among those that were tossed with the King in an open boat sixteen hours, in very rough and cold weather, on the coast of Holland. His health after-

wards declined; and on January 19, 1705-6, he died at Bath.

He was a man whose elegance and judgment were universally confessed, and whose bounty to the learned and witty was generally known. To the indulgent affection of the publick, Lord Rochester bore ample testimony in this remark: "I know not how it is, but Lord Buckhurst may do what he will, yet is never in the wrong."

If such a man attempted poetry, we cannot wonder that his works were praised. Dryden, whom, if Prior tells truth, he distinguished by his beneficence, and who lavished his blandishments on those who are not known to have so well deserved them, undertaking to produce authors of our own country superior to those of antiquity, says, "I would instance your Lordship in satire, and Shakspeare in tragedy." Would it be imagined that, of this rival to antiquity, all the satires were little personal invectives, and that his longest composition was a song of eleven stanzas?

The blame, however, of this exaggerated praise falls on the encomiast, not upon the author; whose performances are, what they pretend to be, the effusions of a man of wit; gay, vigorous, and airy. His verses to Howard shew great fertility of mind; and his *Dorinda* has been imitated by Pope.

STEPNEY.

GEORGE STEPNEY, descended from the Stepneys of Pendegrast in Pembrokeshire, was born at Westminster in 1663. Of his father's condition or fortune I have no account*. Having received the first part of his education at Westminster, where he passed six years in the College, he went at nineteen to Cambridge†, where he continued a friendship begun at school with Mr. Montague, afterwards Earl of Halifax. They came to London together, and are said to have been invited into publick life by the Duke of Dorset. ‡

His qualifications recommended him to many foreign employments, so that his time seems to have been spent in negotiations. In 1692, he was sent envoy to the Elector of Brandenburgh; in 1693, to the Imperial Court; in 1694, to the Elector of Saxony; in 1696, to the Electors of Mentz and Cologne; and the Congress at Frankfort; in 1698, a second

* It has been conjectured that our poet was either son or grandson of Charles, third son of Sir John Stepney, the first Baronet of that family. See Granger's History, vol. II. p. 396. Edit. 8vo. 1775. Mr. Cole says, the poet's father was a grocer. Cole's MSS. in Brit. Mus. C.

† He was entered of Trinity College, and took his Master's degree in 1689. H.

‡ Earl of Dorset.

time to Brandenburgh; in 1699, to the King of Poland; in 1701, again to the Emperor; and in 1706, to the States General. In 1697, he was made one of the commissioners of trade. His life was busy, and not long. He died in 1707; and is buried in Westminster Abbey, with this epitaph, which Jacob transcribed:

H. S. E.
GEORGIUS STEPNEIUS, Armiger,
Vir,
Ob Ingenii acumen,
Literarum Scientiam,
Morum Suavitatem,
Rerum Usum,
Virorum Amplissimorum Consuetudinem,
Linguæ, Styli, ac Vitæ Elegantiam,
Præclara Officia cum Britanniæ tum Europæ præstita,
Suâ ætate multum celebratus,
Apud posteros semper celebrandus;
Plurimas Legationes obiit
Eâ Fide, Diligentiâ, ac Felicitate,
Ut Augustissimorum Principum
Gulielmi & Annæ
Spem in illo repositam
Numquam fefellerit,
Haud raro superaverit.
Post longum Honorum Cursum
Brevî Temporis Spatio confectum,
Cum Naturæ parum, Famæ satis vixerat,
Animam ad altiora aspirantem placidè efflavit.

On the Left hand,

G. S.
Ex Equestri Familiâ Stepneiorum,
De Pendegrast, in Comitatu

Pembrochiensi oriundus,
Westmonasterii natus est, A. D. 1663,
Electus in Collegium
Sancti Petri Westmonast. A. 1676,
Sancti Trinitatis Cantab. 1682.
Consiliariorum quibus Commercii
Cura commissa est 1697.
Chelseiæ mortuus, &, comitante
Magnâ Procerum
Frequentiâ, huc elatus, 1707.

It is reported that the juvenile compositions of Stepney *made grey authors blush.* I know not whether his poems will appear such wonders to the present age. One cannot always easily find the reason for which the world has sometimes conspired to squander praise. It is not very unlikely that he wrote very early as well as he ever wrote; and the performances of youth have many favourers, because the authors yet lay no claim to publick honours, and are therefore not considered as rivals by the distributors of fame.

He apparently professed himself a poet, and added his name to those of the other wits in the version of Juvenal; but he is a very licentious translator, and does not recompense his neglect of the author by beauties of his own. In his original poems, now and then, a happy line may perhaps be found, and now and then a short composition may give pleasure. But there is, in the whole, little either of the grace of wit, or the vigour of nature.

J. PHILIPS.

JOHN PHILIPS was born on the 30th of December, 1676, at Bampton in Oxfordshire; of which place his father Dr. Stephen Philips, archdeacon of Salop, was minister. The first part of his education was domestick; after which he was sent to Winchester, where, as we are told by Dr. Sewel, his biographer, he was soon distinguished by the superiority of his exercises; and, what is less easily to be credited, so much endeared himself to his school-fellows by his civility and good-nature, that they, without murmur or ill-will, saw him indulged by the master with particular immunities. It is related, that, when he was at school, he seldom mingled in play with the other boys, but retired to his chamber; where his sovereign pleasure was to sit, hour after hour, while his hair was combed by somebody, whose service he found means to procure*.

* Isaac Vossius relates, that he also delighted in having his hair combed when he could have it done by barbers or other persons skilled in the rules of prosody. Of the passage that contains this ridiculous fancy, the following is a translation:

At school he became acquainted with the poets ancient and modern, and fixed his attention particularly on Milton.

In 1694 he entered himself at Christ-church; a college at that time in the highest reputation, by the transmission of Busby's scholars to the care first of Fell, and afterwards of Aldrich. Here he was distinguished as a genius eminent among the eminent, and for friendship particularly intimate with Mr. Smith, the author of *Phædra and Hippolytus*. The profession which he intended to follow was that of Physick; and he took much delight in Natural History, of which Botany was his favourite part.

His reputation was confined to his friends and to the university; till about 1703 he extended it to a wider circle by the *Splendid Shilling*, which struck the publick attention with a mode of writing new and unexpected.

This performance raised him so high, that, when Europe resounded with the victory of Blenheim, he was, probably with an occult opposition to Addison, employed to deliver the acclamation of the Tories. It is said that he would willingly have declined the

" Many people take delight in the rubbing of their limbs, and the combing of their hair; but these exercises would delight much more, if the servants at the baths, and of the barbers, were so skilful in this art, that they could express any measures with their fingers. I remember that more than once I have fallen into the hands of men of this sort, who could imitate any measure of songs in combing the hair, so as sometimes to express very intelligibly Iambics, Trochees, Dactyls, &c. from whence there arose to me no small delight." See his Treatise de Poematum cantu & viribus Rythmi. Oxon. 1673. p. 62. H.

task, but that his friends urged it upon him. It appears that he wrote this poem at the house of Mr. St. John.

Blenheim was published in 1705. The next year produced his greatest work, the poem upon *Cider*, in two books; which was received with loud praises, and continued long to be read, as an imitation of Virgil's Georgick, which needed not shun the presence of the original.

He then grew probably more confident of his own abilities, and began to meditate a poem on the *Last Day*; a subject on which no mind can hope to equal expectation.

This work he did not live to finish; his diseases, a slow consumption and an asthma, put a stop to his studies, and on Feb. 15, 1708, at the beginning of his thirty-third year, put an end to his life.

He was buried in the cathedral of Hereford; and Sir Simon Harcourt, afterwards Lord Chancellor, gave him a monument in Westminster Abbey. The inscription at Westminster was written, as I have heard, by Dr. Atterbury, though commonly given to Dr. Freind.

His Epitaph at Hereford:

JOHANNES PHILIPS

Obiit 15 die Feb. Anno { Dom. 1708. / Ætat. suæ 32.

Cujus

Ossa si requiras, hanc Urnam inspice:
Si ingenium nescias, ipsius Opera consule;
Si Tumulum desideras,
Templum adi Westmonasteriense:
Qualis quantusque Vir fuerit,
Dicat elegans illa & præclara,
Quæ cenotaphium ibi decorat,
Inscriptio.
Quàm interim erga Cognatos pius & officiosus,
Testetur hoc saxum
A MARIA PHILIPS Matre ipsius pientissimâ,
Dilecti Filii Memoriæ non sine Lacrymis dicatum.

His Epitaph at Westminster:

Herefordiæ conduntur Ossa,
Hoc in Delubro statuitur Imago,
Britanniam omnem pervagatur Fama,
JOHANNIS PHILIPS:
Qui Viris bonis doctisque juxta charus,
Immortale suum Ingenium,
Eruditione multiplici excultum,
Miro animi candore,
Eximiâ morum simplicitate,
Honestavit.
Litterarum Amœniorum sitim,
Quam Wintoniæ Puer sentire cœperat,
Inter Ædis Christi Alumnos jugiter explevit.
In illo Musarum Domicilio
Præclaris Æmulorum studiis excitatus,
Optimis scribendi Magistris semper intentus,
Carmina sermone Patrio composuit

A Græcis Latinisque fontibus feliciter deducta,
Atticis Romanisque auribus omnino digna,
Versuum quippe Harmoniam
Rythmo didicerat.
Antiquo illo, libero, multiformi
Ad res ipsas apto prorsus, & attemperato,
Non numeris in eundem ferè orbem redeuntibus,
Non Clausularum similiter cadentium sono
Metiri:
Uni in hoc laudis genere Miltono secundus,
Primoque pœne par.
Res seu Tenues, seu Grandes, seu Mediocres
Ornandas sumserat,
Nusquam, non quod decuit,
Et videt, & assecutus est,
Egregius, quocunque Stylum verteret,
Fandi author, & Modorum artifex.
Fas sit Huic,
Auso licèt à tuâ Metrorum Lege discedere,
O Poesis Anglicanæ Pater, atque Conditor, Chaucere,
Alterum tibi latus claudere,
Vatum certe Cineres, tuos undique stipantium
Non dedecebit Chorum.
Simon Harcourt, Miles,
Viri benè de se, de Litteris meriti,
Quoad viveret Fautor,
Post Obitum piè memor,
Hoc illi Saxum poni voluit.
J. Philips, Stephani, S. T. P. Archidiaconi
Salop. Filius, natus est Bamptoniæ
In agro Oxon. Dec. 30, 1676.
Obiit Herefordiæ, Feb. 15, 1708.

Philips has been always praised, without contradiction, as a man modest, blameless, and pious; who bore narrowness of fortune without discontent, and

tedious and painful maladies without impatience; beloved by those that knew him, but not ambitious to be known. He was probably not formed for a wide circle. His conversation is commended for its innocent gaiety, which seems to have flowed only among his intimates: for I have been told, that he was in company silent and barren, and employed only upon the pleasures of his pipe. His addiction to tobacco is mentioned by one of his biographers, who remarks that in all his writings, except *Blenheim*, he has found an opportunity of celebrating the fragrant fume. In common life he was probably one of those who please by not offending, and whose person was loved because his writings were admired. He died honoured and lamented, before any part of his reputation had withered, and before his patron St. John had disgraced him.

His works are few. *The Splendid Shilling* has the uncommon merit of an original design, unless it may be thought precluded by the ancient *Centos*. To degrade the sounding words and stately construction of Milton, by an application to the lowest and most trivial things, gratifies the mind with a momentary triumph over that grandeur which hitherto held its captives in admiration; the words and things are presented with a new appearance, and novelty is always grateful where it gives no pain.

But the merit of such performances begins and ends with the first author. He that should again adapt Milton's phrase to the gross incidents of common life, and even adapt it with more art, which would not be difficult, must yet expect but a small

part of the praise which Philips has obtained; he can only hope to be considered as the repeater of a jest.

"The parody on Milton," says Gildon, "is the only tolerable production of its author." This is a censure too dogmatical and violent. The poem of *Blenheim* was never denied to be tolerable, even by those who do not allow its supreme excellence. It is indeed the poem of a scholar, *all inexpert of war*; of a man who writes books from books, and studies the world in a college. He seems to have formed his ideas of the field of *Blenheim* from the battles of the heroick ages, or the tales of chivalry, with very little comprehension of the qualities necessary to the composition of a modern hero, which Addison has displayed with so much propriety. He makes Marlborough behold at a distance the slaughter made by Tallard, then haste to encounter and restrain him, and mow his way through ranks made headless by his sword.

He imitates Milton's numbers indeed, but imitates them very injudiciously. Deformity is easily copied; and whatever there is in Milton which the reader wishes away, all that is obsolete, peculiar, or licentious, is accumulated with great care by Philips. Milton's verse was harmonious, in proportion to the general state of our metre in Milton's age; and, if he had written after the improvements made by Dryden, it is reasonable to believe that he would have admitted a more pleasing modulation of numbers into his work; but Philips sits down with a resolution to make no more musick than he found; to want all that his master wanted, though he is very far from having what his master had. Those asperities,

therefore, that are venerable in the Paradise Lost, are contemptible in the Blenheim.

There is a Latin ode written to his patron St. John, in return for a present of wine and tobacco, which cannot be passed without notice. It is gay and elegant, and exhibits several artful accommodations of classic expressions to new purposes. It seems better turned than the odes of Hannes.*

To the poem on *Cider*, written in imitation of the *Georgicks*, may be given this peculiar praise, that it is grounded in truth; that the precepts which it contains are exact and just; and that it is therefore at once, a book of entertainment and of science. This I was told by Miller, the great gardener and botanist, whose expression was, that "there were many books written on the same subject in prose, which do not contain so much truth as that poem."

In the disposition of his matter, so as to intersperse precepts relating to the culture of trees with sentiments more generally alluring, and in easy and graceful transitions from one subject to another, he has very diligently imitated his master; but he unhappily pleased himself with blank verse, and supposed that the numbers of Milton, which impress the mind with veneration, combined as they are with subjects

* This ode I am willing to mention, because there seems to be an error in all the printed copies, which is, I find, retained in the last. They all read;

Quam Gratiarum cura decentium
O! O! labellis cui Venus insidet.

The author probably wrote,

Quam Gratiarum cura decentium
Ornat; labellis cui Venus insidet. Dr. J.

Hannes was professor of chemistry at Oxford, and wrote one or two poems in the Musæ Anglicanæ. J. B.

of inconceivable grandeur, could be sustained by images which at most can rise only to elegance. Contending angels may shake the regions of Heaven in blank verse; but the flow of equal measures, and the embellishment of rhyme, must recommend to our attention the art of engrafting, and decide the merit of the *redstreak* and *pearmain*.

What study could confer, Philips had obtained; but natural deficience cannot be supplied. He seems not born to greatness and elevation. He is never lofty, nor does he often surprise with unexpected excellence: but perhaps to his last poem may be applied what Tully said of the work of Lucretius, that "it is written with much art, though with few blazes of genius."

The following fragment, written by Edmund Smith, upon the works of Philips, has been transcribed from the Bodleian manuscripts.

"A Prefatory Discourse to the Poem on Mr. Philips, with a character of his writings.

"It is altogether as equitable some account should be given of those who have distinguished themselves by their writings, as of those who are renowned for great actions. It is but reasonable they, who contribute so much to the immortality of others, should have some share in it themselves; and since their genius only is discovered by their works, it is just that their virtues should be recorded by their friends. For no modest men (as the person I write of was in perfection) will write their own panegyricks; and it is very hard that they should go without reputation, only because they the more deserve it. The end of

writing Lives is for the imitation of the readers. It will be in the power of very few to imitate the Duke of Marlborough: we must be content with admiring his great qualities and actions, without hopes of following them. The private and social virtues are more easily transcribed. The life of Cowley is more instructive, as well as more fine, than any we have in our language. And it is to be wished, since Mr. Philips had so many of the good qualities of that poet, that I had some of the abilities of his historian.

"The Grecian philosophers have had their lives written, their morals commended, and their sayings recorded. Mr. Philips had all the virtues to which most of them only pretended, and all their integrity without any of their affectation.

"The French are very just to eminent men in this point; not a learned man nor a poet can die, but all Europe must be acquainted with his accomplishments. They give praise and expect it in their turns: they commend their Patrus and Molieres as well as their Condés and Turennes; their Pellisons and Racines have their elogies, as well as the prince whom they celebrate; and their poems, their mercuries, and orations, nay their very gazettes, are filled with the praises of the learned.

"I am satisfied, had they a Philips among them, and known how to value him; had they one of his learning, his temper, but above all of that particular turn of humour, that altogether new genius, he had been an example to their poets, and a subject of their panegyricks, and perhaps set in competition with the ancients, to whom only he ought to submit.

"I shall therefore endeavour to do justice to his memory, since nobody else undertakes it. And indeed I can assign no cause why so many of his acquaintance (that are as willing and more able than myself to give an account of him) should forbear to celebrate the memory of one so dear to them, but only that they look upon it as a work entirely belonging to me.

"I shall content myself with giving only a character of the person and his writings, without meddling with the transactions of his life, which was altogether private: I shall only make this known observation of his family, that there was scarce so many extraordinary men in any one. I have been acquainted with five of his brothers (of which three are still living,) all men of fine parts, yet all of a very unlike temper and genius. So that their fruitful mother, like the mother of the gods, seems to have produced a numerous offspring, all of different, though uncommon faculties. Of the living, neither their modesty, nor the humour of the present age, permits me to speak; of the dead, I may say something.

"One of them had made the greatest progress in the study of the law of nature and nations of any one I know. He had perfectly mastered, and even improved, the notions of Grotius, and the more refined ones of Puffendorf. He could refute Hobbes with as much solidity as some of greater name, and expose him with as much wit as Echard. That noble study, which requires the greatest reach of reason and nicety of distinction, was not at all difficult to him. 'Twas a national loss to be deprived of one who understood a science so necessary, and yet so

unknown in England. I shall add only, he had the same honesty and sincerity as the person I write of, but more heat: the former was more inclined to argue, the latter to divert: one employed his reason more; the other his imagination: the former had been well qualified for those posts, which the modesty of the latter made him refuse. His other dead brother would have been an ornament to the college of which he was a member. He had a genius either for poetry or oratory; and, though very young, composed several very agreeable pieces. In all probability he would have wrote as finely, as his brother did nobly. He might have been the Waller, as the other was the Milton of his time. The one might celebrate Marlborough, the other his beautiful offspring. This had not been so fit to describe the actions of heroes as the virtues of private men. In a word, he had been fitter for my place; and, while his brother was writing upon the greatest men that any age ever produced, in a style equal to them, he might have served as a panegyrist on him.

"This is all I think necessary to say of his family. I shall proceed to himself and his writings; which I shall first treat of, because I know they are censured by some out of envy, and more out of ignorance.

"*The Splendid Shilling*, which is far the least considerable, has the more general reputation, and perhaps hinders the character of the rest. The style agreed so well with the burlesque, that the ignorant thought it could become nothing else. Every body is pleased with that work. But to judge rightly of the other requires a perfect mastery of poetry and

criticism, a just contempt of the little turns and witticisms now in vogue, and, above all, a perfect understanding of poetical diction and description.

"All that have any taste of poetry will agree, that the great burlesque is much to be preferred to the low. It is much easier to make a great thing appear little, than a little one great: Cotton and others of a very low genius have done the former; but Philips, Garth, and Boileau, only the latter.

"A picture in miniature is every painter's talent; but a piece for a cupola, where all the figures are enlarged, yet proportioned to the eye, requires a master's hand.

"It must still be more acceptable than the low burlesque, because the images of the latter are mean and filthy, and the language itself entirely unknown to all men of good breeding. The style of Billingsgate would not make a very agreeable figure at St. James's. A gentleman would take but little pleasure in language, which he would think it hard to be accosted in, or in reading words which he could not pronounce without blushing. The lofty burlesque is the more to be admired, because, to write it, the author must be master of two of the most different talents in nature. A talent to find out and expose what is ridiculous, is very different from that which is to raise and elevate. We must read Virgil and Milton for the one, and Horace and Hudibras for the other. We know that the authors of excellent comedies have often failed in the grave style, and the tragedian as often in comedy. Admiration and Laughter are of such opposite natures, that they are seldom created by the same person. The man of mirth

is always observing the follies and weaknesses, the serious writer the virtues or crimes, of mankind; one is pleased with contemplating a beau, the other a hero: Even from the same object they would draw different ideas: Achilles would appear in very different lights to Thersites and Alexander. The one would admire the courage and greatness of his soul; the other would ridicule the vanity and rashness of his temper. As the satirist says to Hannibal:

——I, curre per Alpes,
Ut pueris placeas, et declamatio fias.

"The contrariety of style to the subject pleases the more strongly, because it is more surprising; the expectation of the reader is pleasantly deceived, who expects an humble style from the subject, or a great subject from the style. It pleases the more universally, because it is agreeable to the taste both of the grave and the merry; but more particularly so to those who have a relish of the best writers, and the noblest sort of poetry. I shall produce only one passage out of this poet, which is the misfortune of his Galligaskins:

"My Galligaskins, which have long withstood
The winter's fury and encroaching frosts,
By time subdued (what will not time subdue!)

This is admirably pathetical, and shews very well the vicissitudes of sublunary things. The rest goes on to a prodigious height; and a man in Greenland could hardly have made a more pathetick and terrible complaint. Is it not surprising that the subject should be so mean, and the verse so pompous; that the least things in his poetry, as in a microscope,

should grow great and formidable to the eye? especially considering that, not understanding French, he had no model for his style? that he should have no writer to imitate, and himself be inimitable? that he should do all this before he was twenty? at an age which is usually pleased with a glare of false thoughts, little turns, and unnatural fustian? at an age, at which Cowley, Dryden, and I had almost said Virgil, were inconsiderable? So soon was his imagination at its full strength, his judgment ripe, and his humour complete.

"This poem was written for his own diversion, without any design of publication. It was communicated but to *me;* but soon spread, and fell into the hands of pirates. It was put out, vilely mangled, by Ben. Bragge; *and impudently said to be corrected by the author.* This grievance is now grown more epidemical; and no man now has a right to his own thoughts, or a title to his own writings. Xenophon answered the Persian, who demanded his arms, "We have nothing now left but our arms and our valour: if we surrender the one, how shall we make use of the other?" Poets have nothing but their wits and their writings; and if they are plundered of the latter, I don't see what good the former can do them. To pirate, and publickly own it, to prefix their names to the works they steal, to own and avow the theft, I believe, was never yet heard of but in England. It will sound oddly to posterity, that, in a polite nation, in an enlightened age, under the direction of the most wise, most learned, and most generous encouragers of knowledge in the world, the

property of a mechanick s
than that of a scholar! that
rations should be more valu
ducts of the brain! that it
cobler of a pair of shoes,
the best author of his wh
thing should make a man
writings but the stupidity
of Dryden should meet w
than those of his own F
that Tillotson and St. Ge
Temple, should be set on a
reason why this very paper
and, while the most impud
are publickly vended by th
work is forced to steal abroa

"Our present writers are b
to the same condition Virgil
seized on his estate. But I
upon the Mæcenas of the p
trieve them from it. But, w
may have upon us, it contri
advantage of Mr. Philips: i
tation which he neither desi
the honour of being put up
did not think himself capable
his modesty. And it was re
he, who could raise mean s
still be more elevated on g
that could draw such noble
could not fail upon such a s
Marlborough, *which is capab*

the most low and trifling genius. And, indeed, most of the great works which have been produced in the world have been owing less to the poet than the patron. Men of the greatest genius are sometimes lazy, and want a spur; often modest, and dare not venture in publick: they certainly know their faults in the worst things; and even their best things they are not fond of, because the idea of what they ought to be is far above what they are. This induced me to believe that Virgil desired his works might be burnt, had not the same Augustus that desired him to write them, preserved them from destruction. A scribbling beau may imagine a Poet *may* be induced to write, by the very pleasure he finds in writing; but that is seldom, when people are necessitated to it. I have known men row, and use very hard labour, for diversion, which if they had been tied to, they would have thought themselves very unhappy.

"But to return to *Blenheim*, that work so much admired by some, and censured by others. I have often wished he had wrote it in Latin, that he might be out of the reach of the empty criticks, who could have as little understood his meaning in that language as they do his beauties in his own.

"False criticks have been the plague of all ages; Milton himself, in a very polite court, has been compared to the rumbling of a wheel-barrow: he had been on the wrong side, and therefore could not be a good poet. *And this, perhaps, may be Mr. Philips's case.*

"But I take generally the ignorance of his readers to be the occasion of their dislike. People that have

formed their taste upon the
no relish for Philips: they
and consequently have n
great and majestick; he n
eyes, when he soars so high
their view. I cannot theref
the French to be a judge of
takes Bouhours for a comple
judges of the ancients by th
moderns by the ancients; h
their own authors to be rea
the nearest to it; he often
great thought which is only
and has more instances of t
de Tristibus, than he has ou

"I shall allow, therefore, o
Philips, who make the an
Virgil, their standard.

"But, before I enter on th
sider what is particular in th
examine what ought to be th
try; and next inquire how fa
style.

"His style is particular,
rhyme, and writes in blank v
and frequently postpones th
stantive, and the substantive
out little particles, *a*, and *t*
uses frequent appositions.
whether these alterations of
the true sublime."

* * * * *

WALSH.

WILLIAM WALSH, the son of Joseph Walsh, Esq. of Abberley in Worcestershire, was born in 1663, as appears from the account of Wood, who relates, that at the age of fifteen he became, in 1678, a gentleman commoner of Wadham College.

He left the university without a degree, and pursued his studies in London and at home; that he studied, in whatever place, is apparent from the effect, for he became, in Mr. Dryden's opinion, *the best critick in the nation.*

He was not, however, merely a critick or a scholar, but a man of fashion, and, as Dennis remarks, ostentatiously splendid in his dress. He was likewise a member of parliament and a courtier, knight of the shire for his native county in several parliaments; in another the representative of Richmond in Yorkshire; and gentleman of the horse to Queen Anne, under the Duke of Somerset.

Some of his verses shew him to have been a zealous friend to the Revolution; but his political ardour did not abate his reverence or kindness for Dryden,

to whom he gave a Dissertation on Virgil's Pastorals, in which, however studied, he discovers some ignorance of the laws of French versification.

In 1705, he began to correspond with Mr. Pope, in whom he discovered very early the power of poetry. Their letters are written upon the pastoral comedy of the Italians, and those pastorals which Pope was then preparing to publish.

The kindnesses which are first experienced are seldom forgotten. Pope always retained a grateful memory of Walsh's notice, and mentioned him in one of his latter pieces among those that had encouraged his juvenile studies:

> —— Granville the polite,
> And knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write.

In his Essay on Criticism he had given him more splendid praise; and, in the opinion of his learned commentator, sacrificed a little of his judgment to his gratitude.

The time of his death I have not learned. It must have happened between 1707, when he wrote to Pope, and 1711, when Pope praised him in his Essay. The epitaph makes him forty-six years old: if Wood's account be right, he died in 1709.

He is known more by his familiarity with greater men, than by any thing done or written by himself.

His works are not numerous. In prose he wrote *Eugenia, a Defence of Women;* which Dryden honoured with a Preface.

Esculapius, or the Hospital of Fools, published after his death.

A Collection of Letters and Poems, amorous and gallant, was published in the volumes called Dryden's Miscellany, and some other occasional pieces.

To his Poems and Letters is prefixed a very judicious preface upon Epistolary Composition and Amorous Poetry.

In his *Golden Age restored,* there was something of humour, while the facts were recent; but it now strikes no longer. In his imitation of Horace, the first stanzas are happily turned; and in all his writings there are pleasing passages. He has, however, more elegance than vigour, and seldom rises higher than to be pretty.

DRYDEN.*

Of the great poet whose life I am about to delineate, the curiosity which his reputation must excite, will require a display more ample than can now be given. His contemporaries, however they reverenced his genius, left his life unwritten; and nothing therefore can be known beyond what casual mention and uncertain tradition have supplied.

John Dryden was born August 9, 1631†, at Aldwinkle near Oundle, the son of Erasmus Dryden of Tichmersh; who was the third son of Sir Erasmus Dryden, baronet, of Canons Ashby. All these places are in Northamptonshire; but the original stock of the family was in the county of Huntingdon.‡

He is reported by his last biographer, Derrick, to have inherited from his father an estate of two hundred a year, and to have been bred, as was said, an Anabaptist. For either of these particulars no au-

* The Life of Dryden, though in point of composition it is one of the most admirable of Johnson's productions, is in many particulars incorrect. Mr. Malone, in the Biography prefixed to his "Prose Works," has collected a much more ample and accurate account; and from that valuable work several dates and other particulars have been set right.

† Mr. Malone has lately proved that there is no satisfactory evidence for this date. The inscription on Dryden's monument says only *natus* 1632. See Malone's Life of Dryden, prefixed to his "Critical and Miscellaneous Prose Works." p. 5. note. C.

‡ Of Cumberland. Ibid. p. 10. C.

thority is given.* Such a fortune ought to have secured him from that poverty which seems always to have oppressed him; or, if he had wasted it, to have made him ashamed of publishing his necessities. But though he had many enemies, who undoubtedly examined his life with a scrutiny sufficiently malicious, I do not remember that he is ever charged with waste of his patrimony. He was indeed sometimes reproached for his first religion. I am therefore inclined to believe that Derrick's intelligence was partly true, and parly erroneous. †

From Westminster School, where he was instructed as one of the King's scholars by Dr. Busby, whom he long after continued to reverence, he was in 1650 elected to one of the Westminster scholarships at Cambridge. ‡

Of his school performances has appeared only a poem on the death of Lord Hastings, composed with great ambition of such conceits as, notwithstanding the reformation begun by Waller and Denham, the example of Cowley still kept in reputation. Lord Hastings died of the small-pox; and his poet has made of the pustules first rosebuds, and then gems; at last exalts them into stars; and says,

* Mr. Malone has furnished us with a detailed account of our poet's circumstances, from which it appears, that although he was possessed of a sufficient income in the early part of his life, he was considerably embarrassed at its close.

See Malone's Life, p. 440.

Mr. Derrick's Life of Dryden was prefixed to a very beautiful and correct edition of Dryden's Miscellanies, published by the Tonsons in 1760, 4 vols. 8vo. Derrick's part, however, was poorly executed, and the edition never became popular. C.

‡ He went off to Trinity College, and was admitted to a Bachelor's Degree in Jan. 1653-4, and in 1657 was made M.A.

No comet need foretell h
Whose corpse might see

At the university he does
eager of poetical distinction
early wit either on fictitious
casions. He probably consi
posed to be an author, ou
He obtained, whatever was
in the College. Why he w
be known, and it is vain to
himself injured, he knew h
Life of Plutarch he menti
College with gratitude; but,
he has these lines:

Oxford to him a dearer na
Than his own mother-univ
Thebes did his rude, unkn
He chooses Athens in his r

It was not till the death
that he became a publick
publishing *Heroic Stanzas*
tor *; which, compared with
Waller on the same occasio
great expectations of the ri

When the King was res
other panegyrists of usurpati
or his profession, and publis
poem on the happy Restor
most sacred Majesty King

The reproach of inconstan

* This is a mistake; his poem
appeared in a volume entitled "
Death of Henry Lord Hastings."

shared with such numbers, that it produced neither hatred nor disgrace; if he changed, he changed with the nation. It was, however, not totally forgotten when his reputation raised him enemies.

The same year he praised the new King in a second poem on his restoration. In the *Astrea* was the line,

> An horrid *stillness* first *invades* the *ear*,
> And in that silence we a tempest fear—

for which he was persecuted with perpetual ridicule, perhaps with more than was deserved. *Silence* is indeed mere privation; and, so considered, cannot *invade*; but privation likewise certainly is *darkness*, and probably *cold*; yet poetry has never been refused the right of ascribing effects or agency to them as to positive powers. No man scruples to say that *darkness* hinders him from his work; or that *cold* has killed the plants. Death is also privation; yet who has made any difficulty of assigning to Death a dart and the power of striking?

In settling the order of his works there is some difficulty; for, even when they are important enough to be formally offered to a patron, he does not commonly date his dedication; the time of writing and publishing is not always the same; nor can the first editions be easily found, if even from them could be obtained the necessary information.*

The time at which his first play was exhibited is not certainly known, because it was not printed till it was, some years afterwards, altered and revived; but since the plays are said to be printed in the order in

* The order of his plays has been accurately ascertained by Mr. Malone. C.

which they were written, fi
those of others may be infer
collected, that in 1663, in t
his life, he commenced a wr
pelled undoubtedly by necess
to have loved that exercise of
much pleased himself with hi

Of the stage, when he had
possession for many years;
competition of rivals who som
censure of criticks, which w
often just; but with such a
made him at least secure of
might be the final determina

His first piece was a comed
*lant**. He began with no
performance was so much di
compelled to recall it, and cha
state to the form in which it
is yet sufficiently defective to

I wish that there were no n
progress of his theatrical fam
ders of his mind through the
matick performances; it will
merate them, and to take espe
are distinguished by any pe
concomitant; for the compos
and-twenty dramas include too
to be omitted.

In 1664, he published the
he dedicated to the Earl of C

* The Duke of Guise was his firs
laid aside, and afterwards new-mode

reputation both as a writer and a statesman. In this play he made his essay of dramatick rhyme, which he defends in his dedication, with sufficient certainty of a favourable hearing; for Orrery was himself a writer of rhyming tragedies.

He then joined with Sir Robert Howard in the *Indian Queen*, a tragedy in rhyme. The parts which either of them wrote are not distinguished.

The *Indian Emperor* was published in 1667. It is a tragedy in rhyme, intended for a sequel to *Howard's Indian Queen*. Of this connection notice was given to the audience by printed bills, distributed at the door; an expedient supposed to be ridiculed in the Rehearsal,* where Bayes tells how many reams he has printed, to instill into the audience some conception of his plot.

In this play is the description of Night, which Rymer has made famous by preferring it to those of all other poets.

The practice of making tragedies in rhyme was introduced soon after the Restoration, as it seems, by the Earl of Orrery, in compliance with the opinion of Charles the Second, who had formed his taste by the French theatre; and Dryden, who wrote, and made no difficulty of declaring that he wrote, only to please, and who perhaps knew that by his dexterity of versification he was more likely to excel others in rhyme than without it, very readily adopted his master's preference. He therefore made rhyming tragedies, till, by the prevalence of manifest propriety, he seems to have grown ashamed of making them any longer.

To this play is prefixed a very vehement defence of dramatick rhyme, in confutation of the preface

* A play, in which Bayes is a character. cf p. 349

to the *Duke of Lerma*, in which Sir Robert Howard had censured it.

In 1667 he published *Annus Mirabilis*, the *Year of Wonders*, which may be esteemed one of his most elaborate works.

It is addressed to Sir Robert Howard by a letter, which is not properly a dedication; and, writing to a poet, he has interspersed many critical observations, of which some are common, and some perhaps ventured without much consideration. He began, even now, to exercise the domination of conscious genius, by recommending his own performance: "I am satisfied that as the Prince and General [Rupert and Monk] are incomparably the best subjects I ever had, so what I have written on them is much better than what I have performed on any other. As I have endeavoured to adorn my poem with noble thoughts, so much more to express those thoughts with elocution."

It is written in quatrains, or heroick stanzas of four lines; a measure which he had learned from the *Gondibert* of Davenant, and which he then thought the most majestick that the English language affords. Of this stanza he mentions the incumbrances, encreased as they were by the exactness which the age required. It was, throughout his life, very much his custom to recommend his works, by representation of the difficulties that he had encountered, without appearing to have sufficiently considered, that where there is no difficulty there is no praise.

There seems to be, in the conduct of Sir Robert Howard and Dryden towards each other, something that is not now easily to be explained*. Dryden, in

* See Malone, p. 91.

his dedication to the Earl of Orrery, had defended dramatick rhyme; and Howard, in the preface to a collection of plays, had censured his opinion. Dryden vindicated himself in his *Dialogue on Dramatick Poetry:* Howard, in his preface to the "Duke of Lerma," animadverted on the Vindication; and Dryden, in a preface to the *Indian Emperor*, replied to the Animadversions with great asperity, and almost with contumely. The dedication to this play is dated the year in which the *Annus Mirabilis* was published. Here appears a strange inconsistency; but Langbaine affords some help, by relating that the answer to Howard was not published in the first edition of the play, but was added when it was afterwards reprinted; and as the "Duke of Lerma" did not appear till 1668, the same year in which the dialogue was published, there was time enough for enmity to grow up between authors, who, writing both for the theatre, were naturally rivals.

He was now so much distinguished, that, in *1668 he succeeded Sir William Davenant as poet-laureat. The salary of the laureat had been raised in favour of Jonson, by Charles the First, from an hundred marks to one hundred pounds a-year, and a tierce of wine; a revenue in those days not inadequate to the conveniencies of life.

The same year he published his Essay on Dramatick Poetry, an elegant and instructive dialogue; in which we are told, by Prior, that the principal character is meant to represent the Duke of Dorset.

* He did not obtain the Laurel till Aug. 18, 1670, but, Mr. Malone informs us, the patent had a retrospect, and the salary commenced from the Midsummer after D'Avenant's death. C.

This work seems to have given Addison a model for his Dialogues upon Medals.

Secret Love, or the Maiden Queen, (1668) is a tragi-comedy. In the preface he discusses a curious question, whether a poet can judge well of his own productions? and determines very justly, that, of the plan and disposition, and all that can be reduced to principles of science, the author may depend upon his own opinion; but that, in those parts where fancy predominates, self-love may easily deceive. He might have observed, that what is good only because it pleases, cannot be pronounced good till it has been found to please.

Sir Martin-Marr-all (1668) is a comedy, published without preface or dedication, and at first without the name of the author. Langbaine charges it, like most of the rest, with plagiarism; and observes, that the song is translated from Voiture, allowing, however, that both the sense and measure are exactly observed.

The Tempest (1670) is an alteration of Shakspeare's play, made by Dryden in conjunction with Davenant; "whom," says he, "I found of so quick a fancy, that nothing was proposed to him in which he could not suddenly produce a thought extremely pleasant and surprising; and those first thoughts of his, contrary to the Latin proverb, were not always the least happy; and as his fancy was quick, so likewise were the products of it remote and new. He borrowed not of any other; and his imaginations were such as could not easily enter into any other man."

The effect produced by the conjunction of these two powerful minds was, that to Shakspeare's monster, Caliban, is added a sister monster, Sycorax;

and a woman, who, in the original play, had never seen a man, is in this brought acquainted with a man that had never seen a woman.

About this time, in 1673, Dryden seems to have had his quiet much disturbed by the success of the *Empress of Morocco*, a tragedy written in rhyme by Elkanah Settle; which was so much applauded, as to make him think his supremacy of reputation in some danger. Settle had not only been prosperous on the stage, but, in the confidence of success, had published his play, with sculptures and a preface of defiance. Here was one offence added to another; and, for the last blast of inflammation, it was acted at Whitehall by the court-ladies.

Dryden could not now repress those emotions, which he called indignation, and others jealousy; but wrote upon the play and the dedication such criticism as malignant impatience could pour out in haste.

Of Settle he gives this character: "He's an animal of a most deplored understanding, without reading and conversation. His being is in a twilight of sense, and some glimmering of thought, which he can never fashion into wit or English. His style is boisterous and rough-hewn, his rhyme incorrigibly lewd, and his numbers perpetually harsh and ill-sounding. The little talent which he has, is fancy. He sometimes labours with a thought; but, with the pudder he makes to bring it into the world, 'tis commonly still-born; so that, for want of learning and elocution, he will never be able to express any thing either naturally or justly."

This is not very decent; yet this is one of the pages in which criticism prevails most over brutal fury.

He proceeds: " He has a h
a great felicity in writing non
they will be in spite of
two Empresses, his Villain, a
his Hero, have all a certain
ther—their folly was born a
something of the Elkanah wil

This is Dryden's general c
withhold from the reader a pa
ing gone through the first act,
this act with the most rumb
spoken yet:

" To flattering lightning our fei
Which, back'd with thunder,

Conform a smile to lightning
lightning, and *flattering ligh*
is a threatening thing. And tl
a storm. Now, if I must c
lightning, then my smiles m
to *gild* with *smiles*, is a new
And gild a storm by being
Thunder is part of the storm
storm must help to *gild* anot
backing; as if a man would
for being backed, or having a
So that here is *gilding* by
lightning, *backing*, and *thund*
as if I should say thus: I wil
smiles look like a flattering sto
backed with a trooper, does
am mistaken, if nonsense is
sown. Sure the poet writ th

some smack in a storm, and, being sea-sick, spewed up a good lump of clotted nonsense at once."

Here is perhaps a sufficient specimen; but as the pamphlet, though Dryden's, has never been thought worthy of republication, and is not easily to be found, it may gratify curiosity to quote it more largely:

"——Whene'er she bleeds,
He no severer a damnation needs,
That dares pronounce the sentence of her death,
Than the infection that attends that breath.

That attends that breath.—The poet is at *breath* again; *breath* can never 'scape him; and here he brings in a *breath* that must be *infectious* with *pronouncing* a sentence; and this sentence is not to be pronounced till the condemned party *bleeds;* that is, she must be executed first, and sentenced after; and the *pronouncing* of this *sentence* will be infectious; that is, others will catch the disease of that sentence, and this infecting of others will torment a man's self. The whole is thus; *when she bleeds, thou needest no greater hell or torment to thyself, than infecting of others by pronouncing a sentence upon her.* What hodge-podge does he make here! Never was Dutch grout such clogging, thick, indigestible stuff. But this is but a taste to stay the stomach; we shall have a more plentiful mess presently.

"Now to dish up the poet's broth, that I promised:

"For when we 're dead, and our freed souls enlarg'd,
Of nature's grosser burden we 're discharg'd,
Then gently, as a happy lover's sigh,
Like wand'ring meteors through the air we 'll fly,

-y walk, as subtle guests,
our cruel fathers' breasts,
souls, and track each passion's sphere:
moves there, Ambition here!
iew the dark characters
ders, blood, and wars.
se hideous draughts, and write
then with a radiant light
ll their passions be
fancy;
s, their furies cease,
into a peace.
rrel ends,
ead we 'll make friends."

ess, I will refer myself
e guest. And a rare
minster white-broth.
de of the giblets of
l of *meteors, orbs,*
lark characters,
igned not only
but it is also
urge choler:
ipt to cure
nd, were it
ds, might
le: it is
ling in
never
npu-
ths
e,
t

the world. But let us see what we can make of this stuff:

" For when we 're dead, and our freed souls enlarg'd—

Here he tells us what it is to be *dead;* it is to have *our freed souls set free.* Now, if to have a soul set free, is to be dead; then to have a *freed soul* set free, is to have a dead man die,

" Then gentle, as a happy lover's sigh—

They two like one *sigh,* and that one *sigh* like two wandering meteors,

" —Shall fly through the air—

That is, they shall mount above like falling stars, or else they shall skip like two jacks with lanthorns, or Will with a wisp, and Madge with a candle."

And in their airy walk steal into their cruel fathers' breasts, like subtle guests. So " that their *fathers' breasts* must be in an *airy walk,* an airy *walk* of a *flier. And there they will read their souls, and track the spheres of their passions.* That is, these walking fliers, Jack with a lanthorn, &c. will put on his spectacles, and fall a *reading souls,* and put on his pumps and fall a *tracking of spheres;* so that he will read and run, walk and fly, at the same time! Oh! Nimble Jack! *Then he will see, how revenge here, how ambition there*——The birds will hop about. *And then view the dark characters of sieges, ruins, murders, blood, and wars, in their orbs: Track the characters* to their forms! Oh! rare sport for Jack! Never was place so full of game as these breasts! You cannot stir, but flush a sphere, start a character, or unkennel an orb!"

Settle's is said to have been the first play embel-

lished with sculptures; those ornaments seem to have given poor Dryden great disturbance. He tries however to ease his pain by venting his malice in a parody.

"The poet has not only been so impudent to expose all this stuff, but so arrogant to defend it with an epistle; like a saucy booth-keeper, that, when he had put a cheat upon the people, would wrangle and fight with any that would not like it, or would offer to discover it; for which arrogance our poet receives this correction; and, to jerk him a little the sharper, I will not transpose his verse, but by the help of his own words transnonsense sense, that, by my stuff, people may judge the better what his is:

"Great Boy, thy tragedy and sculptures done,
From press and plates, in fleets do homeward come;
And in ridiculous and humble pride,
Their course in ballad-singers' baskets guide,
Whose greasy twigs do all new beauties take,
From the gay shews thy dainty sculptures make.
Thy lines a mess of rhyming nonsense yield,
A senseless tale, with flattering fustian fill'd.
No grain of sense does in one line appear,
Thy words big bulks of boisterous bombast bear.
With noise they move, and from players' mouths rebound,
When their tongues dance to thy words empty sound.
By thee inspir'd the rumbling verses roll,
As if that rhyme and bombast lent a soul:
And with that soul they seem taught duty too;
To huffing words does humble nonsense bow,
As if it would thy worthless worth enhance,
To th' lowest rank of fops thy praise advance,
To whom, by instinct, all thy stuff is dear:
Their loud claps echo to the theatre.
From breaths of fools thy commendation spreads,
Fame sings thy praise with mouths of loggerheads.

With noise and laughing each thy fustian greets,
'Tis clapt by choirs of empty-headed cits,
Who have their tribute sent, and homage given,
As men in whispers send loud noise to Heaven.

"Thus I have daubed him with his own puddle: and now we are come from aboard his dancing, masking, rebounding, breathing fleet; and, as if we had landed at Gotham, we meet nothing but fools and nonsense."

Such was the criticism to which the genius of Dryden could be reduced, between rage and terrour; rage with little provocation, and terrour with little danger. To see the highest minds thus levelled with the meanest, may produce some solace to the consciousness of weakness, and some mortification to the pride of wisdom. But let it be remembered, that minds are not levelled in their powers but when they are first levelled in their desires. Dryden and Settle had both placed their happiness in the claps of multitudes.

An Evening's Love, or *The Mock Astrologer*, a comedy (1671), is dedicated to the illustrious Duke of Newcastle, whom he courts by adding to his praises those of his lady, not only as a lover but a partner of his studies. It is unpleasing to think how many names, once celebrated, are since forgotten. Of Newcastle's works nothing is now known but his Treatise on Horsemanship.

The Preface seems very elaborately written, and contains many just remarks on the Fathers of the English drama. Shakspeare's plots, he says, are in the hundred novels of Cinthio; those of Beaumont and Fletcher in Spanish Stories; Jonson only made

them for himself. His criticisms upon tragedy, comedy, and farce, are judicious and profound. He endeavours to defend the immorality of some of his comedies by the example of former writers; which is only to say, that he was not the first nor perhaps the greatest offender. Against those that accused him of plagiarism he alleges a favourable expression of the King: "He only desired that they, who accuse me of thefts, would steal him plays like mine;" and then relates how much labour he spends in fitting for the English stage what he borrows from others.

Tyrannick Love, or the Virgin Martyr (1672), was another tragedy in rhyme, conspicuous for many passages of strength and elegance, and many of empty noise and ridiculous turbulence. The rants of Maximin have been always the sport of criticism; and were at length, if his own confession may be trusted, the shame of the writer.

Of this play he takes care to let the reader know, that it was contrived and written in seven weeks. Want of time was often his excuse, or perhaps shortness of time was his private boast in the form of an apology.

It was written before *The Conquest of Granada*, but published after it. The design is to recommend piety. "I considered that pleasure was not the only end of Poesy; and that even the instructions of morality were not so wholly the business of a poet, as that precepts and examples of piety were to be omitted; for to leave that employment altogether to the clergy, were to forget that religion was first taught in verse, which the laziness or dulness of succeeding priesthood turned afterwards into prose."

Thus foolishly could Dryden write, rather than not shew his malice to the parsons.

The two parts of *The Conquest of Granada* (1672) are written with a seeming determination to glut the publick with dramatick wonders; to exhibit in its highest elevation a theatrical meteor of incredible love and impossible valour, and to leave no room for a wilder flight to the extravagance of posterity. All the rays of romantick heat, whether amorous or warlike, glow in Almanzor by a kind of concentration. He is above all laws; he is exempt from all restraints; he ranges the world at will, and governs wherever he appears. He fights without enquiring the cause, and loves in spite of the obligations of justice, of rejection by his mistress, and of prohibition from the dead. Yet the scenes are, for the most part, delightful; they exhibit a kind of illustrious depravity, and majestick madness: such as, if it is sometimes despised, is often reverenced, and in which the ridiculous is mingled with the astonishing.

In the Epilogue to the second part of *The Conquest of Granada*, Dryden indulges his favourite pleasure of discrediting his predecessors; and this Epilogue he has defended by a long postscript. He had promised a second dialogue, in which he should more fully treat of the virtues and faults of the English poets, who have written in the dramatick, epick, or lyrick way. This promise was never formally performed; but, with respect to the dramatick writers, he has given us in his prefaces, and in this postscript, something equivalent; but his purpose being to exalt himself by the comparison, he shews faults distinctly, and only praises excellence in general terms.

A play thus written, in
bility, naturally drew dov
the theatre. One of the
Martin Clifford, to who
of Cowley, with such ver
as might naturally exci
struction from his remarl
beware of receiving chara
ters. Clifford's remarks,
were at last obtained;
want them more, I will
reasonable desire.

In the first Letter his
"You do live," says he,
darkness as you did in t
like a Jack-of-all-trades
but nothing of value; a
plant-animal that ever t
have conversed with are

In the second, he tell
more copied from Achill
"But I am," says he, "
not seen this very *Alm*
guise about this town,
name. Pr'ythee tell m
once the *Indian Empe*
did he not call himself
daraxa once called *Aln*
tezuma the Indian Emp
are either the same, o
my heart, distinguish o
therefore a strange unco

content to steal from others, but dost rob thy poor wretched self too."

Now was Settle's time to take his revenge. He wrote a vindication of his own lines; and, if he is forced to yield any thing, makes reprisals upon his enemy. To say that his answer is equal to the censure, is no high commendation. To expose Dryden's method of analysing his expressions, he tries the same experiment upon the description of the ships in the *Indian Emperor*, of which however he does not deny the excellence; but intends to shew, that by studied misconstruction every thing may be equally represented as ridiculous. After so much of Dryden's elegant animadversions, justice requires that something of Settle's should be exhibited. The following observations are therefore extracted from a quarto pamphlet of ninety-five pages:

> "Fate after him below with pain did move,
> And victory could scarce keep pace above.

"These two lines, if he can shew me any sense or thought in, or any thing but bombast and noise, he shall make me believe every word in his observations on *Morocco* sense.

"In *the Empress of Morocco* were these lines:

> "I'll travel then to some remoter sphere,
> Till I find out new worlds, and crown you there."

"On which Dryden made this remark:

'I believe our learned author takes a sphere for a country: the sphere of Morocco; as if Morocco were the globe of earth and water; but a globe is no sphere neither, by his leave,' &c. So *sphere*

less it relate to a circular mo-
which sense the astronomers
im to expound those lines in

palace go,
nat fight below.
hes by my side,
ve I 'll guide.
appear,
flowing hair,
ling sphere.

w he dares make so
so critical in other
d standing on a
in the first act.
he most unlike
in the world,
nus Mirabi-
of the ship

" What a wonderful pother is here, to make all these poetical beautifications of a ship! that is a *phœnix* in the first stanza, and but a *wasp* in the last: nay, to make his humble comparison of a *wasp* more ridiculous, he does not say it flies upon the waves as nimbly as a wasp, or the like, but it seemed a *wasp*. But our author at the writing of this was not in his altitudes, to compare ships to floating palaces: a comparison to the purpose, was a perfection he did not arrive to till his *Indian Emperor's* days. But perhaps his similitude has more in it than we imagine; this ship had a great many guns in her, and they, put all together, made the sting in the wasp's tail: for this is all the reason I can guess, why it seem'd a *wasp*. But, because we will allow him all we can to help out, let it be a *phœnix sea-wasp*, and the rarity of such an animal may do much towards heightening the fancy.

" It had been much more to his purpose, if he had designed to render the senseless play little, to have searched for some such pedantry as this:

> " Two ifs scarce make one possibility,
> If justice will take all and nothing give,
> Justice, methinks, is not distributive.
> To die or kill you, is the alternative.
> Rather than take your life, I will not live.

" Observe how prettily our author chops logick in heroick verse. Three such fustian canting words as *distributive, alternative,* and *two ifs,* no man but himself would have come within the noise of. But he's a man of general learning, and all comes into his play.

" 'Twould have done well too if he could have met with a rant or two, worth the observation; such as,

" Move swiftly, Sun, and fly a lover's pace,
Leave months and weeks behind thee in thy race.

" But surely the Sun, whether he flies a lover's or not a lover's pace, leaves weeks and months, nay years too, behind him in his race.

" Poor Robin, or any other of the Philo-mathematicks, would have given him satisfaction in the point.

" If I could kill thee now, thy fate 's so low,
That I must stoop, ere I can give the blow.
But mine is fixt so far above thy crown,
That all thy men,
Piled on thy back, can never pull it down.

" Now where that is, Almanzor's fate is fixt, I cannot guess; but, wherever it is, I believe Almanzor, and think that all Abdalla's subjects, piled upon one another, might not pull down his fate so well as without piling: besides, I think Abdalla so wise a man, that, if Almanzor had told him piling his men upon his back might do the feat, he would scarce bear such a weight, for the pleasure of the exploit; but it is a huff, and let Abdalla do it if he dare.

" The people like a headlong torrent go,
And every dam they break or overflow.
But, unoppos'd, they either lose their force,
Or wind in volumes to their former course:

a very pretty allusion, contrary to all sense or reason. Torrents, I take it, let them wind never so much,

can never return to their former course, unless he can suppose that fountains can go upwards, which is impossible: nay more, in the foregoing page he tells us so too; a trick of a very unfaithful memory.

"But can no more than fountains upward flow;

which of a *torrent*, which signifies a rapid stream, is much more impossible. Besides, if he goes to quibble, and say that it is possible by art water may be made return, and the same water run twice in one and the same channel: then he quite confutes what he says; for it is by being opposed, that it runs into its former course: for all engines that make water so return, do it by compulsion and opposition. Or, if he means a headlong torrent for a tide, which would be ridiculous, yet they do not wind in volumes, but come fore-right back (if their upright lies straight to their former course), and that by opposition of the sea-water, that drives them back again.

"And for fancy, when he lights of any thing like it, 'tis a wonder if it be not borrowed. As here, for example of, I find this fanciful thought in his *Ann. Mirab.*

"Old father Thames rais'd up his reverend head;
But fear'd the fate of Simoeis would return:
Deep in his ooze he sought his sedgy bed;
And shrunk his waters back into his urn.

"This is stolen from Cowley's Davideis, p. 9.

"Swift Jordan started, and strait backward fled,
Hiding amongst thick reeds his aged head.
And when the Spaniards their assault begin,
At once beat those without and those within.

"This Almanzor speaks of himself; and sure for one man to conquer an army within the city, and another without the city, at once, is something difficult; but this flight is pardonable to some we meet with in *Granada:* Osmin, speaking of Almanzor,

> "Who, like a tempest that outrides the wind,
> Made a just battle, ere the bodies join'd.

"Pray, what does this honourable person mean by a *tempest that outrides the wind?* a tempest that outrides itself. To suppose a tempest without wind, is as bad as supposing a man to walk without feet; for if he supposes the tempest to be something distinct from the wind, yet, as being the effect of wind only, to come before the cause is a little preposterous; so that, if he takes it one way, or if he takes it the other, those two *ifs* will scarce make one *possibility.*" Enough of Settle.

Marriage à-la-mode (1673) is a comedy dedicated to the Earl of Rochester; whom he acknowledges not only as the defender of his poetry, but the promoter of his fortune. Langbaine places this play in 1673. The Earl of Rochester, therefore, was the famous Wilmot, whom yet tradition always represents as an enemy to Dryden, and who is mentioned by him with some disrespect in the preface to Juvenal.

The Assignation, or Love in a Nunnery, a comedy (1673), was driven off the stage, *against the opinion,* as the author says, *of the best judges.* It is dedicated, in a very elegant address, to Sir Charles Sedley; in which he finds an opportunity for his usual complaint of hard treatment and unreasonable censure.

Amboyna is a tissue of mingled dialogue in verse and prose, and was perhaps written in less time than *The Virgin Martyr*; though the author thought not fit either ostentatiously or mournfully to tell how little labour it cost him, or at how short a warning he produced it. It was a temporary performance, written in the time of the Dutch war, to inflame the nation against their enemies; to whom he hopes, as he declares in his Epilogue, to make his poetry not less destructive than that by which Tyrtæus of old animated the Spartans. This play was written in the second Dutch war, in 1673.

Troilus and *Cressida* (1679) is a play altered from Shakspeare; but so altered, that, even in Langbaine's opinion, "the last scene in the third act is a masterpiece." It is introduced by a discourse on "the Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy," to which I suspect that Rymer's book had given occasion.

The *Spanish Fryar* (1681) is a tragi-comedy, eminent for the happy coincidence and coalition of the two plots. As it was written against the Papists, it would naturally at that time have friends and enemies; and partly by the popularity which it obtained at first, and partly by the real power both of the serious and risible part, it continued long a favourite of the publick.

It was Dryden's opinion, at least for some time, and he maintains it in the dedication of this play, that the drama required an alternation of comick and tragick scenes; and that it is necessary to mitigate by alleviations of merriment the pressure of ponderous events, and the fatigue of toilsome pas-

sions. "Whoever," says he, "cannot perform both parts, *is but half a writer for the stage.*

The *Duke of Guise*, a tragedy (1683), written in conjunction with Lee, as *Oedipus* had been before, seems to deserve notice only for the offence which it gave to the remnant of the Covenanters, and in general to the enemies of the court, who attacked him with great violence, and were answered by him; though at last he seems to withdraw from the conflict, by transferring the greater part of the blame or merit to his partner. It happened that a contract had been made between them, by which they were to join in writing a play; and "he happened," says Dryden, "to claim the promise just upon the finishing of a poem, when I would have been glad of a little respite.—*Two*-thirds of it belonged to him; and to me only the first scene of the play, the whole fourth act, and the first half, or somewhat more, of the fifth."

This was a play written professedly for the party of the Duke of York, whose succession was then opposed. A parallel is intended between the Leaguers of France and the Covenanters of England: and this intention produced the controversy.

Albion and *Albanius* (1685) is a musical drama or opera, written, like "The Duke of Guise," against the Republicans. With what success it was performed, I have not found.*

* Downes says, it was performed on a very unlucky day that on which the Duke of Monmouth landed in the We he intimates, that the consternation into which the was thrown by this event was a reason why it was but six times, and was in general ill received. H.

The State of Innocence and Fall of Man (1675) is termed by him an opera: it is rather a tragedy in heroick rhyme, but of which the personages are such as cannot decently be exhibited on the stage. Some such production was foreseen by Marvel, who writes thus to Milton:

> "Or if a work so infinite be spann'd,
> Jealous I was lest some less skilful hand
> (Such as disquiet always what is well,
> And by ill-imitating would excel,)
> Might hence presume the whole creation's day
> To change in scenes, and shew it in a play."

It is another of his hasty productions; for the heat of his imagination raised it in a month.

This composition is addressed to the Princess of Modena, then Dutchess of York, in a strain of flattery which disgraces genius, and which it was wonderful that any man that knew the meaning of his own words, could use without self-detestation. It is an attempt to mingle Earth and Heaven, by praising human excellence in the language of religion.

The preface contains an apology for heroick verse and poetick licence; by which is meant not any liberty taken in contracting or extending words, but the use of bold fictions and ambitious figures.

The reason which he gives for printing what was never acted, cannot be overpassed: "I was induced to it in my own defence, many hundred copies of it being dispersed abroad without my knowledge or consent, and every one gathering new faults, it became at length a libel against me." These copies, as they gathered faults, were apparently manuscript;

and he lived in an age very unlike ours, if many hundred copies of fourteen hundred lines were likely to be transcribed. An author has a right to print his own works, and needs not seek an apology in falsehood; but he that could bear to write the dedication felt no pain in writing the preface.

Aureng Zebe (1676) is a tragedy founded on the actions of a great prince then reigning, but over nations not likely to employ their criticks upon the transactions of the English stage. If he had known and disliked his own character, our trade was not in those times secure from his resentment. His country is at such a distance, that the manners might be safely falsified, and the incidents feigned; for remoteness of place is remarked, by Racine, to afford the same conveniencies to a poet as length of time. This play is written in rhyme; and has the appearance of being the most elaborate of all the dramas. The personages are imperial; but the dialogue is often domestick, and therefore susceptible of sentiments accommodated to familiar incidents. The complaint of life is celebrated; and there are many other passages that may be read with pleasure.

This play is addressed to the Earl of Mulgrave, afterwards Duke of Buckingham, himself, if not a poet, yet a writer of verses, and a critick. In this address Dryden gave the first hints of his intention to write an epick poem. He mentions his design in terms so obscure, that he seems afraid lest his plan should be purloined, as, he says, happened to him when he told it more plainly in his preface to Juve-

nal. "The design," says he, "you know is great, the story English, and neither too near the present times, nor too distant from them."

All for Love, or the World well Lost (1678), a tragedy founded upon the story of Antony and Cleopatra, he tells us, "is the only play which he wrote for himself:" the rest were given to the people. It is by universal consent accounted the work in which he has admitted the fewest improprieties of style or character; but it has one fault equal to many, though rather moral than critical, that, by admitting the romantick omnipotence of Love, he has recommended as laudable and worthy of imitation, that conduct which, through all ages, the good have censured as vicious, and the bad despised as foolish.

Of this play the prologue and the epilogue, though written upon the common topicks of malicious and ignorant criticism, and without any particular relation to the characters or incidents of the drama, are deservedly celebrated for their elegance and spriteliness.

Limberham, or the kind Keeper (1680), is a comedy, which, after the third night, was prohibited as too indecent for the stage. What gave offence, was in the printing, as the author says, altered or omitted. Dryden confesses that its indecency was objected to; but Langbaine, who yet seldom favours him, imputes its expulsion to resentment, because it "so much exposed the keeping part of the town."

Oedipus (1679) is a tragedy formed by Dryden and Lee, in conjunction, from the works of Sophocles,

Seneca, and Corneille. Dryden planned the scenes, and composed the first and third acts.

Don Sebastian (1690) is commonly esteemed either the first or second of his dramatick performances. It is too long to be all acted, and has many characters and many incidents; and though it is not without sallies of frantick dignity, and more noise than meaning, yet, as it makes approaches to the possibilities of real life, and has some sentiments which leave a strong impression, it continued long to attract attention. Amidst the distresses of princes, and the vicissitudes of empire, are inserted several scenes which the writer intended for comick; but which, I suppose, that age did not much commend, and this would not endure. There are, however, passages of excellence universally acknowledged; the dispute and the reconciliation of Dorax and Sebastian has always been admired.

This play was first acted in 1690, after Dryden had for some years discontinued dramatick poetry.

Amphitryon is a comedy derived from Plautus and Moliere. The dedication is dated Oct. 1690. This play seems to have succeeded at its first appearance; and was, I think, long considered as a very diverting entertainment.

Cleomenes (1692) is a tragedy, only remarkable as it occasioned an incident related in the Guardian, and allusively mentioned by Dryden in his preface. As he came out from the representation, he was accosted thus by some airy stripling: "Had I been left alo with a young beauty, I would not have spent time like your Spartan." "That, Sir," said D "perhaps is true; but give me leave to tell you are no hero."

King Arthur (1691) is another opera. It was the last work that Dryden performed for King Charles, who did not live to see it exhibited; and it does not seem to have been ever brought upon the stage *. In the dedication to the Marquis of Halifax, there is a very elegant character of Charles, and a pleasing account of his latter life. When this was first brought upon the stage, news that the Duke of Monmouth had landed was told in the theatre; upon which the company departed, and *Arthur* was exhibited no more.

His last drama was *Love Triumphant*, a tragi-comedy. In his dedication to the Earl of Salisbury he mentions "the lowness of fortune to which he has voluntarily reduced himself, and of which he has no reason to be ashamed."

This play appeared in 1694. It is said to have been unsuccessful. The catastrophe, proceeding merely from a change of mind, is confessed by the author to be defective. Thus he began and ended his dramatick labours with ill success.

From such a number of theatrical pieces, it will be supposed, by most readers, that he must have improved his fortune; at least, that such diligence with such abilities must have set penury at defiance. But in Dryden's time the drama was very far from that universal approbation which it has now obtained. The playhouse was abhorred by the Puritans, and avoided by those who desired the character of seriousness or decency. A grave lawyer would have debased his dignity, and a young trader would have impaired his credit, by appearing in those mansions of dissolute

* This is a mistake. It was set to musick by Purcell, and well received, and is yet a favourite entertainment. H.

licentiousness. The profits of the theatre, when so many classes of the people were deducted from the audience, were not great; and the poet had, for a long time, but a single night. The first that had two nights was Southern; and the first that had three was Rowe. There were, however, in those days, arts of improving a poet's profit, which Dryden forbore to practise; and a play therefore seldom produced him more than a hundred pounds, by the accumulated gain of the third night, the dedication, and the copy.

Almost every piece had a dedication, written with such elegance and luxuriance of praise, as neither haughtiness nor avarice could be imagined able to resist. But he seems to have made flattery too cheap. That praise is worth nothing of which the price is known.

To increase the value of his copies, he often accompanied his work with a preface of criticism; a kind of learning then almost new in the English language, and which he, who had considered with great accuracy the principles of writing, was able to distribute copiously as occasions arose. By these dissertations the publick judgment must have been much improved; and Swift, who conversed with Dryden, relates that he regretted the success of his own instructions, and found his readers made suddenly too skilful to be easily satisfied.

His prologues had such reputation, that for some time a play was considered as less likely to be well received, if some of his verses did not introduce. The price of a prologue was two guineas, till

asked to write one for Mr. Southern, he demanded three: "Not," said he, "young man, out of disrespect to you; but the players have had my goods too cheap." *

Though he declares, that in his own opinion, his genius was not dramatick, he had great confidence in his own fertility; for he is said to have engaged, by contract, to furnish four plays a year.

It is certain that in one year 1678†, he published *All for Love*, *Assignation*, two parts of the *Conquest of Granada*, *Sir Martin Mar-all*, and the *State of Innocence*, six complete plays; with a celerity of performance, which, though all Langbaine's charges of plagiarism should be allowed, shews such facility of composition, such readiness of language, and such copiousness of sentiment, as, since the time of Lopez de Vega, perhaps no other author has possessed.

He did not enjoy his reputation, however great, nor his profits, however small, without molestation. He had criticks to endure, and rivals to oppose. The two most distinguished wits of the nobility, the Duke of Buckingham and Earl of Rochester, declared themselves his enemies.

* Johnson has here quoted from memory. Warburton is the original relator of this anecdote, who says he had it from Southern himself. According to him, Dryden's usual price had been *four* guineas, and he made Southern pay *six*. In the edition of Southern's plays, 1774, we have a different deviation from the truth, *five* and ten guineas. M.

† Dr. Johnson in this assertion was misled by Langbaine. Only one of these plays appeared in 1678. Nor were there more than three in any one year. The dates are now added from the original editions. R.

Buckingham characterised him, in 1671, by the name of *Bayes* in the "Rehearsal;" a farce which he is said to have written with the assistance of Butler, the author of Hudibras; Martin Clifford, of the Charter-house; and Dr. Sprat, the friend of Cowley, then his chaplain. Dryden and his friends laughed at the length of time, and the number of hands, employed upon this performance; in which, though by some artifice of action it yet keeps possession of the stage, it is not possible now to find any thing that might not have been written without so long delay, or a confederacy so numerous.

To adjust the minute events of literary history, is tedious and troublesome; it requires indeed no great force of understanding, but often depends upon enquiries which there is no opportunity of making, or is to be fetched from books and pamphlets not always at hand.

The *Rehearsal* was played in 1671*, and yet is represented as ridiculing passages in the *Conquest of Granada* and *Assignation*, which were not published till 1678; in *Marriage à-la-mode*, published in 1673; and in *Tyrannick Love*, in 1677. These contradictions shew how rashly satire is applied.†

* It was published in 1672. R.

† This remark, as Mr. Malone observes, is founded upon the erroneous dates with which Johnson was supplied by Langbaine. The Rehearsal was played in 1671, but not published till the next year; the Wild Gallant was printed in 1669, the Maiden Queen in 1668, Tyrannick Love in 1670, the two parts of Granada were performed in 1669 and 1670, though not printed till 1672. Additions were afterwards made to the Rehearsal, and

It is said that this farce was originally intended against Davenant, who, in the first draught, was characterised by the name of *Bilboa*. Davenant had been a soldier and an adventurer.

There is one passage in the Rehearsal still remaining, which seems to have related originally to Davenant. Bayes hurts his nose, and comes in with brown paper applied to the bruise; how this affected Dryden, does not appear. Davenant's nose had suffered such diminution by mishaps among the women, that a patch upon that part evidently denoted him.

It is said likewise that Sir Robert Howard was once meant. The design was probably to ridicule the reigning poet, whoever he might be.

Much of the personal satire, to which it might owe its first reception, is now lost or obscured. Bayes probably imitated the dress, and mimicked the manner, of Dryden: the cant words which are so often in his mouth may be supposed to have been Dryden's habitual phrases, or customary exclamations. Bayes, when he is to write, is blooded and purged: this, as Lamotte relates himself to have heard, was the real practice of the poet.

There were other strokes in the Rehearsal by which malice was gratified: the debate between Love and Honour, which keeps Prince Volscius in a single boot, is said to have alluded to the miscon-

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among these are the parodies on Assignation, which are not to be found in Buckingham's play as it originally appeared. Mr. Malone denies that there is any allusion to Marriage à-la-mode. See Malone, p. 100. J. B.

duct of the Duke of Ormond, who lost Dublin to the rebels while he was toying with a mistress.

The Earl of Rochester, to suppress the reputation of Dryden, took Settle into his protection, and endeavoured to persuade the publick that its approbation had been to that time misplaced. Settle was a while in high reputation: his *Empress of Morocco*, having first delighted the town, was carried in triumph to Whitehall, and played by the ladies of the court. Now was the poetical meteor at the highest; the next moment began its fall. Rochester withdrew his patronage; seeming resolved, says one of his biographers, "to have a judgment contrary to that of the town;" perhaps being unable to endure any reputation beyond a certain height, even when he had himself contributed to raise it.

Neither criticks nor rivals did Dryden much mischief, unless they gained from his own temper the power of vexing him, which his frequent bursts of resentment give reason to suspect. He is always angry at some past, or afraid of some future censure; but he lessens the smart of his wounds by the balm of his own approbation, and endeavours to repel the shafts of criticism by opposing a shield of adamantine confidence.

The perpetual accusation produced against him, was that of plagiarism, against which he never attempted any vigorous defence; for, though he was perhaps sometimes injuriously censured, he would, by denying part of the charge, have confessed the rest; and, as his adversaries had the proof in their own hands, he, who knew that wit had little power against facts, wisely left in that perplexity which

generality produces, a question which it was his interest to suppress, and which, unless provoked by vindication, few were likely to examine.

Though the life of a writer, from about thirty-five to sixty-three, may be supposed to have been sufficiently busied by the composition of eight-and-twenty pieces for the stage, Dryden found room in the same space for many other undertakings.

But, how much soever he wrote, he was at least once suspected of writing more; for, in 1679, a paper of verses, called *An Essay on Satire*, was shewn about in manuscript; by which the Earl of Rochester, the Dutchess of Portsmouth, and others, were so much provoked, that, as was supposed (for the actors were never discovered), they procured Dryden, whom they suspected as the author, to be way-laid and beaten. This incident is mentioned by the Duke of Buckinghamshire*, the true writer, in his Art of Poetry; where he says of Dryden,

> Though prais'd and beaten for another's rhymes,
> His own deserve as great applause sometimes.

His reputation in time was such, that his name was thought necessary to the success of every poetical or literary performance, and therefore he was engaged to contribute something, whatever it might be, to many publications. He prefixed the Life of Polybius to the translation of Sir Henry Sheers; and those of Lucian and Plutarch, to versions of their works by different hands. Of the English Tacitus he translated the first book; and, if Gordon be credited, translated it from the French. Such a charge can hardly be

* It is mentioned by A. Wood, Athen. Oxon. vol. ii. p. 804. 2d Ed. C.

mentioned without some degree of indignation; but it is not, I suppose, so much to be inferred, that Dryden wanted the literature necessary to the perusal of Tacitus, as that, considering himself as hidden in a crowd, he had no awe of the publick; and, writing merely for money, was contented to get it by the nearest way.

In 1680, the Epistles of Ovid being translated by the poets of the time, among which one was the work of Dryden*, and another of Dryden and Lord Mulgrave, it was necessary to introduce them by a preface; and Dryden, who on such occasions was regularly summoned, prefixed a discourse upon translation, which was then struggling for the liberty that it now enjoys. Why it should find any difficulty in breaking the shackles of verbal interpretation, which must for ever debar it from elegance, it would be difficult to conjecture, were not the power of prejudice every day observed. The authority of Jonson, Sandys, and Holiday, had fixed the judgment of the nation; and it was not easily believed that a better way could be found than they had taken, though Fanshaw, Denham, Waller, and Cowley, had tried to give examples of a different practice.

In 1681, Dryden became yet more conspicuous by uniting politicks with poetry, in the memorable satire called *Absalom and Achitophel*, written against the faction which, by Lord Shaftesbury's incitement, set the Duke of Monmouth at its head.

Of this poem, in which personal satire was ap-

* Dryden translated *two* entire epistles, Canace to Macareus, and Dido to Æneas. Helen to Paris was translated by him and Lord Mulgrave. MALONE. J. B.

plied to the support of publick principles, and in which therefore every mind was interested, the reception was eager, and the sale so large, that my father, an old bookseller, told me, he had not known it equalled but by Sacheverell's trial.

The reason of this general perusal Addison has attempted to derive from the delight which the mind feels in the investigation of secrets; and thinks that curiosity to decypher the names procured readers to the poem. There is no need to enquire why those verses were read, which, to all the attractions of wit, elegance, and harmony, added the co-operation of all the factious passions, and filled every mind with triumph or resentment.

It could not be supposed that all the provocation given by Dryden would be endured without resistance or reply. Both his person and his party were exposed in their turns to the shafts of satire, which, though neither so well pointed, nor perhaps so well aimed, undoubtedly drew blood.

One of these poems is called *Dryden's Satire on his Muse;* ascribed, though, as Pope says, falsely, to Somers, who was afterwards chancellor. The poem, whosesoever it was, has much virulence, and some spriteliness. The writer tells all the ill that he can collect both of Dryden and his friends.

The poem of *Absalom and Achitophel* had two answers, now both forgotten; one called *Azaria and Hushai;* the other *Absalom senior.* Of these hostile compositions, Dryden apparently imputes *Absalom senior* to Settle, by quoting in his verses against him the second line. *Azaria and Hushai* was, as Wood says, imputed to him, though it is somewhat un-

likely that he should write twice on the same occasion. This is a difficulty which I cannot remove, for want of a minuter knowledge of poetical * transactions.

The same year he published *The Medal*, of which the subject is a medal struck on Lord Shaftesbury's escape from a prosecution, by the *ignoramus* of a grand jury of Londoners.

In both poems he maintains the same principles, and saw them both attacked by the same antagonist. Elkanah Settle, who had answered *Absalom*, appeared with equal courage in opposition to *The Medal*, and published an answer called *The Medal reversed*, with so much success in both encounters, that he left the palm doubtful, and divided the suffrages of the nation. Such are the revolutions of fame, or such is the prevalence of fashion, that the man, whose works have not yet been thought to deserve the care of collecting them, who died forgotten in an hospital, and whose latter years were spent in contriving shows for fairs, and carrying an elegy or epithalamium, of which the beginning and end were occasionally varied, but the intermediate parts were always the same, to every house where there was a funeral or a wedding, might with truth have had inscribed upon his stone,

Here lies the Rival and Antagonist of Dryden.

Settle was, for this rebellion, severely chastised by Dryden under the name of *Doeg*, in the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel;* and was perhaps for his factious audacity made the city poet, whose annual office was to describe the glories of the Mayor's day. Of these bards he was the last, and seems not much

* Azaria and Hushai was written by Samuel Pordage, a dramatick writer of that time. C.

to have deserved even this degree of regard, if it was paid to his political opinions; for he afterwards wrote a panegyrick on the virtues of Judge Jefferies; and what more could have been done by the meanest zealot for prerogative?

Of translated fragments, or occasional poems, to enumerate the titles, or settle the dates, would be tedious, with little use. It may be observed, that, as Dryden's genius was commonly excited by some personal regard, he rarely writes upon a general topick.

Soon after the accession of King James, when the design of reconciling the nation to the Church of Rome became apparent, and the religion of the court gave the only efficacious title to its favours, Dryden declared himself a convert to Popery. This at any other time might have passed with little censure. Sir Kenelm Digby embraced Popery; the two Reynolds reciprocally converted one another*; and Chillingworth himself was a while so entangled in the wilds of controversy, as to retire for quiet to an infallible Church. If men of argument and study can find such difficulties, or such motives, as may either unite them to the Church of Rome, or detain them in uncertainty, there can be no wonder that a man, who perhaps never enquired why he was a Protestant, should by an artful and experienced disputant be made a Papist, overborne by the sudden violence of new and unexpected arguments, or deceived by a representation which shews only the doubts on one part, and only the evidence on the other.

* Dr. John Reynolds, who lived temp. Jac. I. was at first a zealous Papist, and his brother William as earnest a Protestant; but by mutual disputation each converted the other. See Fuller's Church History, p. 47. book x. H.

That conversion will always be suspected that apparently concurs with interest. He that never finds his error till it hinders his progress towards wealth or honour, will not be thought to love Truth only for herself. Yet it may easily happen that information may come at a commodious time; and, as truth and interest are not by any fatal necessity at variance, that one may by accident introduce the other. When opinions are struggling into popularity, the arguments by which they are opposed or defended become more known; and he that changes his profession would perhaps have changed it before, with the like opportunities of instruction. This was then the state of Popery; every artifice was used to shew it in its fairest form; and it must be owned to be a religion of external appearance sufficiently attractive.

It is natural to hope that a comprehensive is likewise an elevated soul, and that whoever is wise is also honest. I am willing to believe that Dryden, having employed his mind, active as it was, upon different studies, and filled it, capacious as it was, with other materials, came unprovided to the controversy, and wanted rather skill to discover the right, than virtue to maintain it. But enquiries into the heart are not for man; we must now leave him to his Judge.

The priests, having strengthened their cause by so powerful an adherent, were not long before they brought him into action. They engaged him to defend the controversial papers found in the strong box of Charles the Second; and, what yet was harder, to defend them against Stillingfleet.

With hopes of promoting Popery, he was employed to translate Maimbourg's History of the League; which he published with a large introduction. His name is likewise prefixed to the English Life of Francis Xavier; but I know not that he ever owned himself the translator. Perhaps the use of his name was a pious fraud, which however seems not to have had much effect; for neither of the books, I believe, was ever popular.

The version of Xavier's Life is commended by Brown, in a pamphlet not written to flatter; and the occasion of it is said to have been, that the Queen, when she solicited a son, made vows to him as her tutelary saint.

He was supposed to have undertaken to translate Varillas's History of Heresies; and, when Burnet published Remarks upon it, to have written an *Answer**; upon which Burnet makes the following observation:

"I have been informed from England, that a gentleman, who is famous both for poetry and several other things, had spent three months in translating M. Varillas's History; but that, as soon as my Reflections appeared, he discontinued his labour, finding the credit of his author was gone. Now, if he thinks it is recovered by his Answer, he will perhaps go on with his translation; and this may be, for aught I know, as good an entertainment for him as the conversation that he had set on between the Hinds and Panthers, and all the rest of animals, for whom M. Varillas may serve well enough as an author: and this history and that poem are such extraordinary things of

* This is a mistake. See Malone, p. 194, &c. C.

their kind, that it will be but suitable to see the author of the worst poem become likewise the translator of the worst history that the age has produced. If his grace and his wit improve both proportionably, he will hardly find that he has gained much by the change he has made, from having no religion, to chuse one of the worst. It is true, he had somewhat to sink from in matter of wit; but, as for his morals, it is scarce possible for him to grow a worse man than he was. He has lately wreaked his malice on me for spoiling his three months labour; but in it he has done me all the honour that any man can receive from him, which is to be railed at by him. If I had ill-nature enough to prompt me to wish a very bad wish for him, it should be, that he would go on and finish his translation. By that it will appear, whether the English nation, which is the most competent judge in this matter, has, upon the seeing our debate, pronounced in M. Varillas's favour, or in mine. It is true, Mr. D. will suffer a little by it; but at least it will serve to keep him in from other extravagancies; and if he gains little honour by this work, yet he cannot lose so much by it as he has done by his last employment."

Having probably felt his own inferiority in theological controversy, he was desirous of trying whether, by bringing poetry to aid his arguments, he might become a more efficacious defender of his new profession. To reason in verse was, indeed, one of his powers; but subtilty and harmony, united, are still feeble, when opposed to truth.

Actuated therefore by zeal for Rome, or hope of

fame, he published the *Hind and Panther*, a poem in which the Church of Rome, figured by the *milk-white Hind*, defends her tenets against the Church of England, represented by the *Panther*, a beast beautiful, but spotted.

A fable which exhibits two beasts talking Theology, appears at once full of absurdity; and it was accordingly ridiculed in the *City Mouse and Country Mouse*, a parody, written by Montague, afterwards Earl of Halifax, and Prior, who then gave the first specimen of his abilities.

The conversion of such a man, at such a time, was not likely to pass uncensured. Three dialogues were published by the facetious Thomas Brown, of which the two first were called "Reasons of Mr. Bayes's changing his Religion: and the third, "The Reasons of Mr. Hains the Player's Conversion and Re-conversion." The first was printed in 1688, the second not till 1690, the third in 1691. The clamour seems to have been long continued, and the subject to have strongly fixed the publick attention.

In the two first dialogues Bayes is brought into the company of Crites and Eugenius, with whom he had formerly debated on dramatick poetry. The two talkers in the third are Mr. Bayes and Mr. Hains.

Brown was a man not deficient in literature, nor destitute of fancy; but he seems to have thought it the pinnacle of excellence to be a *merry fellow;* and therefore laid out his powers upon small jests or gross buffoonery; so that his performances have little intrinsick value, and were read only while they were recommended by the novelty of the event that occasioned them.

These dialogues are like his other works: what sense or knowledge they contain is disgraced by the garb in which it is exhibited. One great source of pleasure is to call Dryden *little Bayes*. Ajax, who happens to be mentioned, is "he that wore as many cow-hides upon his shield as would have furnished half the King's army with shoe-leather."

Being asked whether he had seen the *Hind and Panther*, Crites answers: "Seen it! Mr. Bayes, why I can stir no where but it pursues me; it haunts me worse than a pewter-buttoned serjeant does a decayed cit. Sometimes I meet it in a band-box, when my laundress brings home my linen; sometimes, whether I will or no, it lights my pipe at a coffee-house; sometimes it surprises me in a trunk-maker's shop; and sometimes it refreshes my memory for me on the backside of a Chancery-lane parcel. For your comfort too, Mr. Bayes, I have not only seen it, as you may perceive, but have read it too, and can quote it as freely upon occasion as a frugal tradesman can quote that noble treatise the *Worth of a Penny* to his extravagant 'prentice, that revels in stewed apples and penny custards."

The whole animation of these compositions arises from a profusion of ludicrous and affected comparisons. "To secure one's chastity," says Bayes, "little more is necessary than to leave off a correspondence with the other sex, which, to a wise man, is no greater a punishment than it would be to a fanatick parson to be forbid seeing *The Cheats* and *The Committee*; or for my Lord Mayor and Aldermen to be interdicted the sight of *The London Cuckold*." This is the

general strain, and therefore I shall be easily excused the labour of more transcription.

Brown does not wholly forget past transactions: "You began," says Crites to Bayes, "with a very indifferent religion, and have not mended the matter in your last choice. It was but reason that your Muse, which appeared first in a tyrant's quarrel, should employ her last efforts to justify the usurpations of the *Hind*."

Next year the nation was summoned to celebrate the birth of the Prince. Now was the time for Dryden to rouse his imagination, and strain his voice. Happy days were at hand, and he was willing to enjoy and diffuse the anticipated blessings. He published a poem, filled with predictions of greatness and prosperity; predictions of which it is not necessary to tell how they have been verified.

A few months passed after these joyful notes, and every blossom of Popish hope was blasted for ever by the Revolution. A Papist now could be no longer laureat. The revenue, which he had enjoyed with so much pride and praise, was transferred to Shadwell, an old enemy, whom he had formerly stigmatised by the name of *Og*. Dryden could not decently complain that he was deposed; but seemed very angry that Shadwell succeeded him, and has therefore celebrated the intruder's inauguration in a poem exquisitely satirical, called *Mac Flecknoe**; of which the Dunciad, as Pope himself declares, is an imita-

* All Dryden's biographers have misdated this poem, which Mr. Malone's more accurate researches prove to have been published on the 4th of October 1682. C.

tion, though more extended in its plan, and more diversified in its incidents.

It is related by Prior, that Lord Dorset, when as chamberlain he was constrained to eject Dryden from his office, gave him from his own purse an allowance equal to the salary. This is no romantick or incredible act of generosity; an hundred a year is often enough given to claims less cogent, by men less famed for liberality. Yet Dryden always represented himself as suffering under a publick infliction; and once particularly demands respect for the patience with which he endured the loss of his little fortune. His patron might, indeed, enjoin him to suppress his bounty; but, if he suffered nothing, he should not have complained.

During the short reign of King James, he had written nothing for the stage*, being, in his opinion, more profitably employed in controversy and flattery. Of praise he might perhaps have been less lavish without inconvenience, for James was never said to have much regard for poetry: he was to be flattered only by adopting his religion.

Times were now changed: Dryden was no longer the court-poet, and was to look back for support to his former trade; and having waited about two years, either considering himself as discountenanced by the publick, perhaps expecting a second Revolution, he produced *Don Sebastian* in 1690; and in the next four years four dramas more.

In 1693 appeared a new version of Juvenal and

* *Albion and Albanius* must however be excepted. R.

Persius. Of Juvenal he translated the first, third, sixth, tenth, and sixteenth satires; and of Persius the whole work. On this occasion he introduced his two sons to the publick, as nurselings of the Muses. The fourteenth of Juvenal was the work of John, and the seventh of Charles Dryden. He prefixed a very ample preface, in the form of a dedication to Lord Dorset; and there gives an account of the design which he had once formed to write an epick poem on the actions either of Arthur or the Black Prince. He considered the epick as necessarily including some kind of supernatural agency, and had imagined a new kind of contest between the guardian angels of kingdoms, of whom he conceived that each might be represented zealous for his charge, without any intended opposition to the purposes of the Supreme Being, of which all created minds must in part be ignorant.

This is the most reasonable scheme of celestial interposition that ever was formed. The surprizes and terrors of enchantments, which have succeeded to the intrigues and oppositions of Pagan deities, afford very striking scenes, and open a vast extent to the imagination; but, as Boileau observes (and Boileau will be seldom found mistaken), with this incurable defect, that, in a contest between Heaven and Hell, we know at the beginning which is to prevail; for this reason we follow Rinaldo to the enchanted wood with more curiosity than terror.

In the scheme of Dryden there is one great difficulty, which yet he would perhaps have had address enough to surmount. In a war, justice can be but on one side; and, to entitle the hero to the pro-

tection of angels, he must fight in the defence of indubitable right. Yet some of the celestial beings, thus opposed to each other, must have been represented as defending guilt.

That this poem was never written, is reasonably to be lamented. It would doubtless have improved our numbers, and enlarged our language; and might perhaps have contributed by pleasing instruction to rectify our opinions, and purify our manners.

What he required as the indispensable condition of such an undertaking, a publick stipend, was not likely in those times to be obtained. Riches were not become familiar to us; nor had the nation yet learned to be liberal.

This plan he charged Blackmore with stealing; "only," says he, "the guardian angels of kingdoms were machines too ponderous for him to manage."

In 1694, he began the most laborious and difficult of all his works, the translation of Virgil; from which he borrowed two months, that he might turn "Fresnoy's Art of Painting" into English prose. The preface, which he boasts to have written in twelve mornings, exhibits a parallel of poetry and painting, with a miscellaneous collection of critical remarks, such as cost a mind stored like his no labour to produce them.

In 1697, he published his version of the works of Virgil; and, that no opportunity of profit might be lost, dedicated the Pastorals to the Lord Clifford, the Georgicks to the Earl of Chesterfield, and the Æneid to the Earl of Mulgrave. This œconomy of flattery, at once lavish and discreet, did not pass without observation.

This translation was censured by Milbourne, a clergyman, styled, by Pope, "the fairest of criticks," because he exhibited his own version to be compared with that which he condemned.

His last work was his Fables, published in 1699, in consequence, as is supposed, of a contract now in the hands of Mr. Tonson; by which he obliged himself, in consideration of three hundred pounds, to finish for the press ten thousand verses.

In this volume is comprised the well-known ode on St. Cecilia's day, which, as appeared by a letter communicated to Dr. Birch, he spent a fortnight in composing and correcting. But what is this to the patience and diligence of Boileau, whose *Equivoque*, a poem of only three hundred and forty-six lines, took from his life eleven months to write it, and three years to revise it?

Part of this book of Fables is the first Iliad in English, intended as a specimen of a version of the whole. Considering into what hands Homer was to fall, the reader cannot but rejoice that this project went no further.

The time was now at hand which was to put an end to all his schemes and labours. On the 1st of May 1701, having been some time, as he tells us, a cripple in his limbs, he died, in Gerard-street, of a mortification in his leg.

There is extant a wild story relating to some vexatious events that happened at his funeral, which, at the end of Congreve's Life, by a writer of I know not what credit, are thus related, as I

find the account transferred to a biographical dictionary *.

" Mr. Dryden dying on the Wednesday morning, Dr. Thomas Sprat, then Bishop of Rochester and Dean of Westminster, sent the next day to the Lady Elizabeth Howard, Mr. Dryden's widow, that he would make a present of the ground, which was forty pounds, with all the other Abbey-fees. The Lord Halifax likewise sent to the Lady Elizabeth, and Mr. Charles Dryden her son, that, if they would give him leave to bury Mr. Dryden, he would inter him with a gentleman's private funeral, and afterwards bestow five hundred pounds on a monument in the Abbey; which, as they had no reason to refuse, they accepted. On the Saturday following the company came: the corpse was put into a velvet hearse; and eighteen mourning coaches, filled with company, attended. When they were just ready to move, the Lord Jefferies, son of the Lord Chancellor Jefferies, with some of his rakish companions, coming by, asked whose funeral it was: and being told Mr. Dryden's, he said, 'What, shall Dryden, the greatest honour and ornament of the nation, be buried after this private manner! No, gentlemen, let all that loved Mr. Dryden, and honour his memory, alight and join with me in gaining my lady's consent to let me have the honour of his interment, which shall be after another manner than this; and I will bestow a thousand pounds on a monument in the Abbey for him.'

* This story has been traced to its source, and clearly proved to be a fabrication, by Mr. Malone. See Malone's Life, 347.

The gentlemen in the coaches, not knowing of the Bishop of Rochester's favour, nor of the Lord Halifax's generous design (they both having, out of respect to the family, enjoined the Lady Elizabeth and her son to keep their favour concealed to the world, and let it pass for their own expence), readily came out of the coaches, and attended Lord Jefferies up to the lady's bedside, who was then sick. He repeated the purport of what he had before said; but she absolutely refusing, he fell on his knees, vowing never to rise till his request was granted. The rest of the company by his desire kneeled also; and the lady, being under a sudden surprize, fainted away. As soon as she recovered her speech, she cried, *No, no.* Enough, gentlemen, replied he; my lady is very good; she says, *Go, go.* She repeated her former words with all her strength, but in vain, for her feeble voice was lost in their acclamations of joy; and the Lord Jefferies ordered the horsemen to carry the corpse to Mr. Russel's, an undertaker in Cheapside, and leave it there till he should send orders for the embalment, which, he added, should be after the royal manner. His directions were obeyed, the company dispersed, and Lady Elizabeth and her son remained inconsolable. The next day Mr. Charles Dryden waited on the Lord Halifax and the Bishop, to excuse his mother and himself, by relating the real truth. But neither his Lordship nor the Bishop would admit of any plea; especially the latter, who had the Abbey lighted, the ground opened, the choir attending, an anthem ready set, and himself waiting for some time without

any corpse to bury. The undertaker, after three days' expectance of orders for embalment without receiving any, waited on the Lord Jefferies; who pretending ignorance of the matter, turned it off with an ill-natured jest, saying, that those who observed the orders of a drunken frolick deserved no better; that he remembered nothing at all of it; and that he might do what he pleased with the corpse. Upon this, the undertaker waited upon the Lady Elizabeth and her son, and threatened to bring the corpse home, and set it before the door. They desired a day's respite, which was granted. Mr. Charles Dryden wrote a handsome letter to the Lord Jefferies, who returned it with this cool answer: 'That he knew nothing of the matter, and would be troubled no more about it.' He then addressed the Lord Halifax and the Bishop of Rochester, who absolutely refused to do any thing in it. In this distress Dr. Garth sent for the corpse to the College of Physicians, and proposed a funeral by subscription, to which himself set a most noble example. At last a day, about three weeks after Mr. Dryden's decease, was appointed for the interment. Dr Garth pronounced a fine Latin oration, at the College, over the corpse; which was attended to the Abbey by a numerous train of coaches. When the funeral was over, Mr. Charles Dryden sent a challenge to the Lord Jefferies, who refusing to answer it, he sent several others, and went often himself; but could neither get a letter delivered, nor admittance to speak to him: which so incensed him, that he resolved, since his Lordship refused to answer him like a gen-

tleman, that he would watch an opportunity to meet and fight off-hand, though with all the rules of honour; which his Lordship hearing, left the town: and Mr. Charles Dryden could never have the satisfaction of meeting him, though he sought it till his death with the utmost application."

This story I once intended to omit, as it appears with no great evidence; nor have I met with any confirmation, but in a letter of Farquhar; and he only relates that the funeral of Dryden was tumultuary and confused*.

Supposing the story true, we may remark, that the gradual change of manners, though imperceptible in the process, appears great when different times, and those not very distant, are compared. If at this time a young drunken Lord should interrupt the pompous regularity of a magnificent funeral, what would be the event, but that he would be justled out of the way, and compelled to be quiet? If he should thrust him-

* An earlier account of Dryden's funeral than that above cited, though without the circumstances that preceded it, is given by Edward Ward, who in his London Spy, published in 1706, relates, that on the occasion there was a performance of solemn Musick at the College; and that at the procession, which himself saw, standing at the end of Chancery-lane, Fleet Street, there was a concert of hautboys and trumpets. The day of Dryden's interment, he says, was Monday the 13th of May, which, according to Johnson, was twelve days after his decease, and shews how long his funeral was in suspense. Ward knew not that the expense of it was defrayed by subscription; but compliments Lord Jefferies for so pious an undertaking. He also says, that the cause of Dryden's death was an inflammation in his toe, occasioned by the flesh growing over the nail, which being neglected produced a mortification in his leg. H.

self into a house, he would be sent roughly away; and, what is yet more to the honour of the present time, I believe that those who had subscribed to the funeral of a man like Dryden, would not, for such an accident, have withdrawn their contributions.*

He was buried among the poets in Westminster Abbey, where, though the Duke of Newcastle had, in a general dedication prefixed by Congreve to his dramatick works, accepted thanks for his intention of erecting him a monument, he lay long without distinction, till the Duke of Buckinghamshire gave him a tablet, inscribed only with the name of DRYDEN.

He married the Lady Elizabeth Howard, daughter of the Earl of Berkshire, with circumstances, according to the satire imputed to Lord Somers, not very honourable to either party: by her he had three sons, Charles, John, and Henry. Charles was usher of the palace to Pope Clement the XIth; and, visiting England in 1704, was drowned in an attempt to swim across the Thames at Windsor.

John was author of a comedy called *The Husband his own Cuckold.* He is said to have died at Rome. Henry entered into some religious order. It is some proof of Dryden's sincerity in his second religion, that

* In the Register of the College of Physicians, is the following Entry: "May 3, 1700. Comitiis Censoriis ordinariis. At the request of several persons of quality, that Mr. Dryden might be carried from the College of Physicians to be interred at Westminster, it was unanimously granted by the President and Censors."

This entry is not calculated to afford any credit to the narrative concerning Lord Jefferies. R.

he taught it to his sons. A man conscious of hypocritical profession in himself, is not likely to convert others; and, as his sons were qualified in 1693 to appear among the translators of Juvenal, they must have been taught some religion before their father's change.

Of the person of Dryden I know not any account; of his mind, the Portrait which has been left by Congreve, who knew him with great familiarity, is such as adds our love of his manners to our admiration of his genius. "He was," we are told, "of a nature exceedingly humane and compassionate, ready to forgive injuries, and capable of a sincere reconciliation with those who had offended him. His friendship, where he professed it, went beyond his professions. He was of a very easy, of very pleasing access; but somewhat slow, and, as it were, diffident in his advances to others: he had that in his nature which abhorred intrusion into any society whatever. He was therefore less known, and consequently his character became more liable to misapprehensions and misrepresentations: he was very modest, and very easily to be discountenanced in his approaches to his equals or superiors. As his reading had been very extensive, so was he very happy in a memory tenacious of every thing that he had read. He was not more possessed of knowledge than he was communicative of it; but then his communication was by no means pedantick, or imposed upon the conversation, but just such, and went so far as, by the natural turn of the conversation in which he was engaged, it was necessarily promoted or required. He was extremely ready and gentle in his correction of the errors of any writer who thought fit to consult him, and full

as ready and patient to admit of the reprehensions of others, in respect of his own oversights or mistakes."

To this account of Congreve nothing can be objected but the fondness of friendship; and to have excited that fondness in such a mind is no small degree of praise. The disposition of Dryden, however, is shewn in this character rather as it exhibited itself in cursory conversation, than as it operated on the more important parts of life. His placability and his friendship indeed were solid virtues; but courtesy and good-humour are often found with little real worth. Since Congreve, who knew him well, has told us no more, the rest must be collected as it can from other testimonies, and particularly from those notices which Dryden has very liberally given us of himself.

The modesty which made him so slow to advance, and so easy to be repulsed, was certainly no suspicion of deficient merit, or unconsciousness of his own value: he appears to have known, in its whole extent, the dignity of his character, and to have set a very high value on his own powers and performances. He probably did not offer his conversation, because he expected it to be solicited; and he retired from a cold reception, not submissive but indignant, with such reverence of his own greatness as made him unwilling to expose it to neglect or violation.

His modesty was by no means inconsistent with ostentatiousness: he is diligent enough to remind the world of his merit, and expresses with very little scruple his high opinion of his own powers; but his self-commendations are read without scorn or indignation; we allow his claims, and love his frankness.

Tradition, however, has not allowed that his confidence in himself exempted him from jealousy of others. He is accused of envy and insidiousness; and is particularly charged with inciting Creech to translate Horace, that he might lose the reputation which Lucretius had given him.

Of this charge we immediately discover that it is merely conjectural; the purpose was such as no man would confess; and a crime that admits no proof, why should we believe?

He has been described as magisterially presiding over the younger writers, and assuming the distribution of poetical fame; but he who excels has a right to teach, and he whose judgment is incontestable may, without usurpation, examine and decide.

Congreve represents him as ready to advise and instruct; but there is reason to believe that his communication was rather useful than entertaining. He declares of himself that he was saturnine, and not one of those whose spritely sayings diverted company; and one of his censurers makes him say,

> Nor wine nor love could ever see me gay;
> To writing bred, I knew not what to say.

There are men whose powers operate only at leisure and in retirement, and whose intellectual vigour deserts them in conversation; whom merriment confuses, and objection disconcerts; whose bashfulness restrains their exertion, and suffers them not to speak till the time of speaking is past; or whose attention to their own character makes them unwilling to utter at hazard what has not been considered, and cannot be recalled.

Of Dryden's sluggishness in conversation it is vain to search or to guess the cause. He certainly wanted neither sentiments nor language; his intellectual treasures were great, though they were locked up from his own use. "His thoughts," when he wrote, flowed in upon him so fast, that his only care was which to chuse, and which to reject." Such rapidity of composition naturally promises a flow of talk; yet we must be content to believe what an enemy says of him, when he likewise says it of himself. But, whatever was his character as a companion, it appears that he lived in familiarity with the highest persons of his time. It is related by Carte of the Duke of Ormond, that he used often to pass a night with Dryden, and those with whom Dryden consorted: who they were, Carte has not told; but certainly the convivial table at which Ormond sat was not surrounded with a plebeian society. He was indeed reproached with boasting of his familiarity with the great: and Horace will support him in the opinion, that to please superiours is not the lowest kind of merit.

The merit of pleasing must, however, be estimated by the means. Favour is not always gained by good actions or laudable qualities. Caresses and preferments are often bestowed on the auxiliaries of vice, the procurers of pleasure, or the flatterers of vanity. Dryden has never been charged with any personal agency unworthy of a good character: he abetted vice and vanity only with his pen. One of his enemies has accused him of lewdness in his conversation; but, if accusation without proof be credited, who shall be innocent?

His works afford too many examples of dissolute licentiousness and abject adulation; but they were probably, like his merriment, artificial and constrained; the effects of study and meditation, and his trade rather than his pleasure.

Of the mind that can trade in corruption, and can deliberately pollute itself with ideal wickedness for the sake of spreading the contagion in society, I wish not to conceal or excuse the depravity.—Such degradation of the dignity of genius, such abuse of superlative abilities, cannot be contemplated but with grief and indignation. What consolation can be had, Dryden has afforded, by living to repent, and to testify his repentance.

Of dramatick immorality he did not want examples among his predecessors, or companions among his contemporaries; but, in the meanness and servility of hyperbolical adulation, I know not whether, since the days in which the Roman emperors were deified, he has been ever equalled, except by Afra Behn in an address to Eleanor Gwyn. When once he has undertaken the task of praise, he no longer retains shame in himself, nor supposes it in his patron. As many odoriferous bodies are observed to diffuse perfumes from year to year, without sensible diminution of bulk or weight, he appears never to have impoverished his mint of flattery by his expences, however lavish. He had all the forms of excellence, intellectual and moral, combined in his mind, with endless variation; and, when he had scattered on the hero of the day the golden shower of wit and virtue, he had ready for him, whom he wished to court on the morrow, new wit and virtue with another stamp.

Of this kind of meanness he never seems to decline the practice, or lament the necessity: he considers the great as entitled to encomiastick homage, and brings praise rather as a tribute than a gift, more delighted with the fertility of his invention, than mortified by the prostitution of his judgment. It is indeed not certain, that on these occasions his judgment much rebelled against his interest. There are minds which easily sink into submission, that look on grandeur with undistinguishing reverence, and discover no defect where there is elevation of rank and affluence of riches.

With his praises of others and of himself is always intermingled a strain of discontent and lamentation, a sullen growl of resentment, or a querulous murmur of distress. His works are undervalued, his merit is unrewarded, and "he has few thanks to pay his stars that he was born among Englishmen." To his criticks he is sometimes contemptuous, sometimes resentful, and sometimes submissive. The writer who thinks his works formed for duration, mistakes his interest when he mentions his enemies. He degrades his own dignity by shewing that he was affected by their censures, and gives lasting importance to names, which, left to themselves, would vanish from remembrance. From this principle Dryden did not often depart; his complaints are for the greater part general; he seldom pollutes his page with an adverse name. He condescended indeed to a controversy with Settle, in which he perhaps may be considered rather as assaulting than repelling; and since Settle is sunk into oblivion, his libel remains injurious only to himself.

Among answers to criticks, no poetical attacks, or altercations, are to be included; they are, like other poems, effusions of genius, produced as much to obtain praise as to obviate censure. These Dryden practised, and in these he excelled.

Of Collier, Blackmore, and Milbourne, he has made mention in the Preface to his Fables. To the censure of Collier, whose remarks may be rather termed admonitions than criticisms, he makes little reply; being, at the age of sixty-eight, attentive to better things than the claps of a playhouse. He complains of Collier's rudeness, and the "horse-play of his raillery;" and asserts, that "in many places he has perverted by his glosses the meaning" of what he censures; but in other things he confesses that he is justly taxed; and says with great calmness and candour, "I have pleaded guilty to all thoughts or expressions of mine that can be truly accused of obscenity, immorality, or profaneness, and retract them. If he be my enemy, let him triumph; if he be my friend, he will be glad of my repentance." Yet, as our best dispositions are imperfect, he left standing in the same book a reflection on Collier of great asperity, and indeed of more asperity than wit.

Blackmore he represents as made his enemy by the poem of *Absalom and Achitophel*, which "he thinks a little hard upon his fanatick patrons;" and charges him with borrowing the plan of his *Arthur* from the Preface to Juvenal, "though he had," says he, "the baseness not to acknowledge his benefactor, but instead of it to traduce me in a libel."

The libel in which Blackmore traduced him was a

Satire upon Wit; in which, having lamented the exuberance of false wit and the deficiency of true, he proposes that all wit should be re-coined before it is current, and appoints masters of assay who shall reject all that is light or debased.

'Tis true, that when the coarse and worthless dross
Is purg'd away, there will be mighty loss:
Ev'n Congreve, Southern, manly Wycherley,
When thus refin'd will grievous sufferers be;
Into the melting-pot when Dryden comes,
What horrid stench will rise, what noisome fumes!
How will he shrink, when all his lewd allay,
And wicked mixture, shall be purg'd away!

Thus stands the passage in the last edition; but in the original there was an abatement of the censure, beginning thus;

But what remains will be so pure, 'twill bear
Th' examination of the most severe.

Blackmore, finding the censure resented, and the civility disregarded, ungenerously omitted the softer part. Such variations discover a writer who consults his passions more than his virtue; and it may be reasonably supposed that Dryden imputes his enmity to its true cause.

Of Milbourne he wrote only in general terms, such as are always ready at the call of anger, whether just or not: a short extract will be sufficient. "He pretends a quarrel to me, that I have fallen foul upon priesthood; if I have, I am only to ask pardon of good priests, and am afraid his share of the reparation will come to little. Let him be satisfied that he shall never be able to force himself

upon me for an adversary; I contemn him too much to enter into competition with him.

"As for the rest of those who have written against me, they are such scoundrels that they deserve not the least notice to be taken of them. Blackmore and Milbourne are only distinguished from the crowd by being remembered to their infamy."

Dryden indeed discovered, in many of his writings, an affected and absurd malignity to priests and priesthood, which naturally raised him many enemies, and which was sometimes as unseasonably resented as it was exerted. Trapp is angry that he calls the sacrificer in the Georgicks "The Holy Butcher:" the translation is indeed ridiculous; but Trapp's anger arises from his zeal, not for the author, but the priest; as if any reproach of the follies of Paganism could be extended to the preachers of truth.

Dryden's dislike of the priesthood is imputed by Langbaine, and I think by Brown, to a repulse which he suffered when he solicited ordination; but he denies, in the Preface to his Fables, that he ever designed to enter into the Church; and such a denial he would not have hazarded, if he could have been convicted of falsehood.

Malevolence to the clergy is seldom at a great distance from irreverence of religion, and Dryden affords no exception to this observation. His writings exhibit many passages, which, with all the allowance that can be made for characters and occasions, are such as piety would not have admitted, and such as may vitiate light and unprincipled minds. But there is no reason for supposing that he disbelieved

the religion which he disobeyed. He forgot his duty rather than disowned it. His tendency to profaneness is the effect of levity, negligence, and loose conversation, with a desire of accommodating himself to the corruption of the times, by venturing to be wicked as far as he durst. When he professed himself a convert to Popery, he did not pretend to have received any new conviction of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity.

The persecution of criticks was not the worst of his vexations; he was much more disturbed by the importunities of want. His complaints of poverty are so frequently repeated, either with the dejection of weakness sinking in helpless misery, or the indignation of merit claiming its tribute from mankind, that it is impossible not to detest the age which could impose on such a man the necessity of such solicitations, or not to despise the man who could submit to such solicitations without necessity.

Whether by the world's neglect, or his own imprudence, I am afraid that the greatest part of his life was passed in exigencies. Such outcries were surely never uttered but in severe pain. Of his supplies or his expences no probable estimate can now be made. Except the salary of the Laureat, to which King James added the office of Historiographer, perhaps with some additional emoluments, his whole revenue seems to have been casual; and it is well known that he seldom lives frugally who lives by chance. Hope is always liberal; and they that trust her promises make little scruple of revelling to day on the profits of the morrow.

Of his plays the profit was not great; and of the produce of his other works very little intelligence can be had. By discoursing with the late amiable Mr. Tonson, I could not find that any memorials of the transactions between his predecessor and Dryden had been preserved, except the following papers:

"I do hereby promise to pay John Dryden, Esq. or order, on the 25th of March, 1699, the sum of two hundred and fifty guineas, in consideration of ten thousand verses, which the said John Dryden, Esq. is to deliver to me Jacob Tonson, when finished, whereof seven thousand five hundred verses, more or less, are already in the said Jacob Tonson's possession. And I do hereby farther promise, and engage myself, to make up the said sum of two hundred and fifty guineas three hundred pounds sterling to the said John Dryden, Esq. his executors, administrators, or assigns, at the beginning of the second impression of the said ten thousand verses.

"In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this 20th day of March, 1698–9.

"Jacob Tonson.

"Sealed and delivered, being first duly stampt, pursuant to the acts of parliament for that purpose in the presence of
Ben. Portlock,
Will. Congreve.

"March 24, 1698.

"Received then of Mr. Jacob Tonson the sum of two hundred sixty-eight pounds fifteen shillings,

in pursuance of an agreement for ten thousand verses, to be delivered by me to the said Jacob Tonson, whereof I have already delivered to him about seven thousand five hundred, more or less; he the said Jacob Tonson being obliged to make up the foresaid sum of two hundred sixty-eight pounds fifteen shillings three hundred pounds, at the beginning of the second impression of the foresaid ten thousand verses;

"I say, received by me

"John Dryden.

"Witness, Charles Dryden."

Two hundred and fifty guineas, at 1*l.* 1*s.* 6*d.* is 268*l.* 15*s.*

It is manifest, from the dates of this contract, that it relates to the volume of Fables, which contains about twelve thousand verses, and for which therefore the payment must have been afterwards enlarged.

I have been told of another letter yet remaining, in which he desires Tonson to bring him money, to pay for a watch which he had ordered for his son, and which the maker would not leave without the price.

The inevitable consequence of poverty is dependence. Dryden had probably no recourse in his exigencies but to his bookseller. The particular character of Tonson I do not know; but the general conduct of traders was much less liberal in those times than in own own; their views were narrower, and their manners grosser. To the mercantile ruggedness of that race, the delicacy of the poet was sometimes exposed. Lord Bolingbroke, who in his youth had cultivated poetry, related to Dr. King of

Oxford, that one day, when he visited Dryden, they heard, as they were conversing, another person entering the house. "This," said Dryden, "is Tonson. You will take care not to depart before he goes away: for I have not completed the sheet which I promised him; and if you leave me unprotected, I must suffer all the rudeness to which his resentment can prompt his tongue."

What rewards he obtained for his poems, besides the payment of the bookseller, cannot be known: Mr. Derrick, who consulted some of his relations, was informed that his Fables obtained five hundred pounds from the Dutchess of Ormond; a present not unsuitable to the magnificence of that splendid family; and he quotes Moyle, as relating that forty pounds were paid by a musical society for the use of *Alexander's Feast.*

In those days the œconomy of government was yet unsettled, and the payments of the Exchequer were dilatory and uncertain: of this disorder there is reason to believe that the Laureat sometimes felt the effects; for, in one of his Prefaces he complains of those, who, being intrusted with the distribution of the Prince's bounty, suffer those that depend upon it to languish in penury.

Of his petty habits or slight amusements, tradition has retained little. Of the only two men whom I have found to whom he was personally known, one told me, that at the house which he frequented, called Will's-Coffee-house, the appeal upon any literary dispute was made to him; and the other related, that his armed chair, which in the winter had a settled

and prescriptive place by the fire, was in the summer placed in the balcony, and that he called the two places his winter and his summer seat. This is all the intelligence which his two survivors afforded me.

One of his opinions will do him no honour in the present age, though in his own time, at least in the beginning of it, he was far from having it confined to himself. He put great confidence in the prognostications of judicial astrology. In the Appendix to the Life of Congreve is a narrative of some of his predictions wonderfully fulfilled; but I know not the writer's means of information, or character of veracity. That he had the configurations of the horoscope in his mind, and considered them as influencing the affairs of men, he does not forbear to hint.

> The utmost malice of the stars is past.—
> Now frequent *trines* the happier lights among,
> And *high-rais'd Jove*, from his dark prison freed,
> Those weights took off that on his planet hung,
> Will gloriously the new-laid works succeed.

He has elsewhere shewn his attention to the planetary powers; and in the preface to his Fables has endeavoured obliquely to justify his superstition, by attributing the same to some of the Ancients. The letter, added to this narrative, leaves no doubt of his notions or practice.

So slight and so scanty is the knowledge which I have been able to collect concerning the private life and domestick manners of a man whom every English generation must mention with reverence as a critick and a poet.

DRYDEN may be properly considered as the father of English criticism, as the writer who first taught us to determine upon principles the merit of composition. Of our former poets, the greatest dramatist wrote without rules, conducted through life and nature by a genius that rarely misled, and rarely deserted him. Of the rest, those who knew the laws of propriety had neglected to teach them.

Two "Arts of English Poetry" were written in the days of Elizabeth by Webb and Puttenham, from which something might be learned, and a few hints had been given by Jonson and Cowley; but Dryden's *Essay on Dramatick Poetry* was the first regular and valuable treatise on the art of writing.

He who, having formed his opinions in the present age of English literature, turns back to peruse this dialogue, will not perhaps find much increase of knowledge, or much novelty of instruction; but he is to remember that critical principles were then in the hands of a few, who had gathered them partly from the Ancients, and partly from the Italians and French. The structure of dramatick poems was not then generally understood. Audiences applauded by instinct, and poets perhaps often pleased by chance.

A writer who obtains his full purpose loses himself in his own lustre. Of an opinion which is no longer doubted, the evidence ceases to be examined. Of an art universally practised, the first teacher is forgotten. Learning once made popular is no longer learning; it has the appearance of something which we have bestowed upon ourselves, as the dew appears to rise from the field which it refreshes.

To judge rightly of an author, we must transport ourselves to his time, and examine what were the wants of his contemporaries, and what were his means of supplying them. That which is easy at one time was difficult at another. Dryden at least imported his science, and gave his country what it wanted before; or rather, he imported only the materials, and manufactured them by his own skill.

The Dialogue on the Drama was one of his first essays of criticism, written when he was yet a timorous candidate for reputation, and therefore laboured with that diligence which he might allow himself somewhat to remit, when his name gave sanction to his positions, and his awe of the publick was abated, partly by custom, and partly by success. It will not be easy to find, in all the opulence of our language, a treatise so artfully variegated with successive representations of opposite probabilities, so enlivened with imagery, so brightened with illustrations. His portraits of the English dramatists are wrought with great spirit and diligence. The account of Shakspeare may stand as a perpetual model of encomiastick criticism; exact without minuteness, and lofty without exaggeration. The praise lavished by Longinus, on the attestation of the heroes of Marathon, by Demosthenes, fades away before it. In a few lines is exhibited a character, so extensive in its comprehension, and so curious in its limitations, that nothing can be added, diminished, or reformed; nor can the editors and admirers of Shakspeare, in all their emulation of reverence, boast of much more than of having diffused and paraphrased this epitome

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As he had studied with great diligence the art of Poetry, and enlarged or rectified his notions, by experience perpetually increasing, he had his mind stored with principles and observations; he poured out his knowledge with little labour; for of labour, notwithstanding the multiplicity of his productions, there is sufficient reason to suspect that he was not a lover. To write *con amore*, with fondness for the employment, with perpetual touches and retouches, with unwillingness to take leave of his own idea, and an unweared pursuit of unattainable perfection, was, I think, no part of his character.

His criticism may be considered as general or occasional. In his general precepts, which depend upon the nature of things, and the structure of the human mind, he may doubtless be safely recommended to the confidence of the reader; but his occasional and particular positions were sometimes interested, sometimes negligent, and sometimes capricious. It is not without reason that Trapp, speaking of the praises which he bestows on Palamon and Arcite, says, " Novimus judicium Drydeni de poemate quodam Chauceri, pulchro sane illo, et admodum laudando, nimirum quod non modo vere epicum sit, sèd Iliada etiam atque Æneada æquet, imo superet. Sed novimus eodem tempore viri illius maximi non semper accuratissimas esse censuras, nec ad severissimam critices normam exactas: illo judice id plerumque optimum est, quod nunc præ manibus habet, et in quo nunc occupatur."

He is therefore by no means constant to himself. His defence and desertion of dramatick rhyme is

generally known. Spence, in his remarks on Pope's Odyssey, produces what he thinks an unconquerable quotation from Dryden's preface to the Æneid, in favour of translating an epick poem into blank verse; but he forgets that when his author attempted the Iliad, some years afterwards, he departed from his own decision, and translated into rhyme.

When he has any objection to obviate, or any licence to defend, he is not very scrupulous about what he asserts, nor very cautious, if the present purpose be served, not to entangle himself in his own sophistries. But, when all arts are exhausted, like other hunted animals, he sometimes stands at bay; when he cannot disown the grossness of one of his plays, he declares that he knows not any law that prescribes morality to a comick poet.

His remarks on ancient or modern writers are not always to be trusted. His parallel of the versification of Ovid with that of Claudian has been very justly censured by Sewel*. His comparison of the first line of Virgil with the first of Statius is not happier. Virgil, he says, is soft and gentle, and would have thought Statius mad, if he had heard him thundering out

Quæ superimposito moles geminata colosso.

Statius perhaps heats himself, as he proceeds, to exaggerations somewhat hyperbolical; but undoubtedly Virgil would have been too hasty, if he had condemned him to straw for one sounding line.

* Preface to Ovid's Metamorphoses. Dr. J.

Dryden wanted an instance, and the first that occurred was imprest into the service.

What he wishes to say, he says at hazard; he cited *Gorbuduc*, which he had never seen; gives a false account of Chapman's versification; and discovers, in the preface to his Fables, that he translated the first book of the Iliad without knowing what was in the second.

It will be difficult to prove that Dryden ever made any great advances in literature. As having distinguished himself at Westminster under the tuition of Busby, who advanced his scholars to a height of knowledge very rarely attained in grammar-schools, he resided afterwards at Cambridge, it is not to be supposed, that his skill in the ancient languages was deficient, compared with that of common students; but his scholastic acquisitions seem not proportionate to his opportunities and abilities. He could not, like Milton or Cowley, have made his name illustrious merely by his learning. He mentions but few books, and those such as lie in the beaten track of regular study; from which if ever he departs, he is in danger of losing himself in unknown regions.

In his Dialogue on the Drama, he pronounces with great confidence that the Latin tragedy of Medea is not Ovid's, because it is not sufficiently interesting and pathetick. He might have determined the question upon surer evidence; for it is quoted by Quintilian as the work of Seneca; and the only line which remains of Ovid's play, for one line is left us, is not there to be found. There was therefore no need of the gravity of conjecture, or the

discussion of plot or sentiment, to find what was already known upon higher authority than such discussions can ever reach.

His literature, though not always free from ostentation, will be commonly found either obvious, and made his own by the art of dressing it; or superficial, which, by what he gives, shews what he wanted; or erroneous, hastily collected, and negligently scattered.

Yet it cannot be said that his genius is ever unprovided of matter, or that his fancy languishes in penury of ideas. His works abound with knowledge, and sparkle with illustrations. There is scarcely any science or faculty that does not supply him with occasional images and lucky similitudes; every page discovers a mind very widely acquainted both with art and nature, and in full possession of great stores of intellectual wealth. Of him that knows much it is natural to suppose that he has read with diligence: yet I rather believe that the knowledge of Dryden was gleaned from accidental intelligence and various conversation, by a quick apprehension, a judicious selection, and a happy memory, a keen appetite of knowledge, and a powerful digestion; by vigilance that permitted nothing to pass without notice, and a habit of reflection that suffered nothing useful to be lost. A mind like Dryden's, always curious, always active, to which every understanding was proud to be associated, and of which every one solicited the regard, by an ambitious display of himself, had a more pleasant, perhaps a nearer way to knowledge than by the silent progress of solitary reading. I do not suppose that

he despised books, or intentionally neglected them; but that he was carried out, by the impetuosity of his genius, to more vivid and speedy instructors; and that his studies were rather desultory and fortuitous than constant and systematical.

It must be confessed that he scarcely ever appears to want book-learning but when he mentions books; and to him may be transferred the praise which he gives his master Charles:

> His conversation, wit, and parts,
> His knowledge in the noblest useful arts,
> Were such, dead authors could not give,
> But habitudes of those that live,
> Who, lighting him, did greater lights receive:
> He drained from all, and all they knew,
> His apprehension quick, his judgment true:
> That the most learn'd with shame confess,
> His knowledge more, his reading only less.

Of all this, however, if the proof be demanded, I will not undertake to give it; the atoms of probability, of which my opinion has been formed, lie scattered over all his works; and by him who thinks the question worth his notice, his works must be perused with very close attention.

Criticism, either didactick or defensive, occupies almost all his prose, except those pages which he has devoted to his patrons; but none of his prefaces were ever thought tedious. They have not the formality of a settled style, in which the first half of the sentence betrays the other. The clauses are never balanced, nor the periods modelled; every word seems to drop by chance, though it falls into its proper place.

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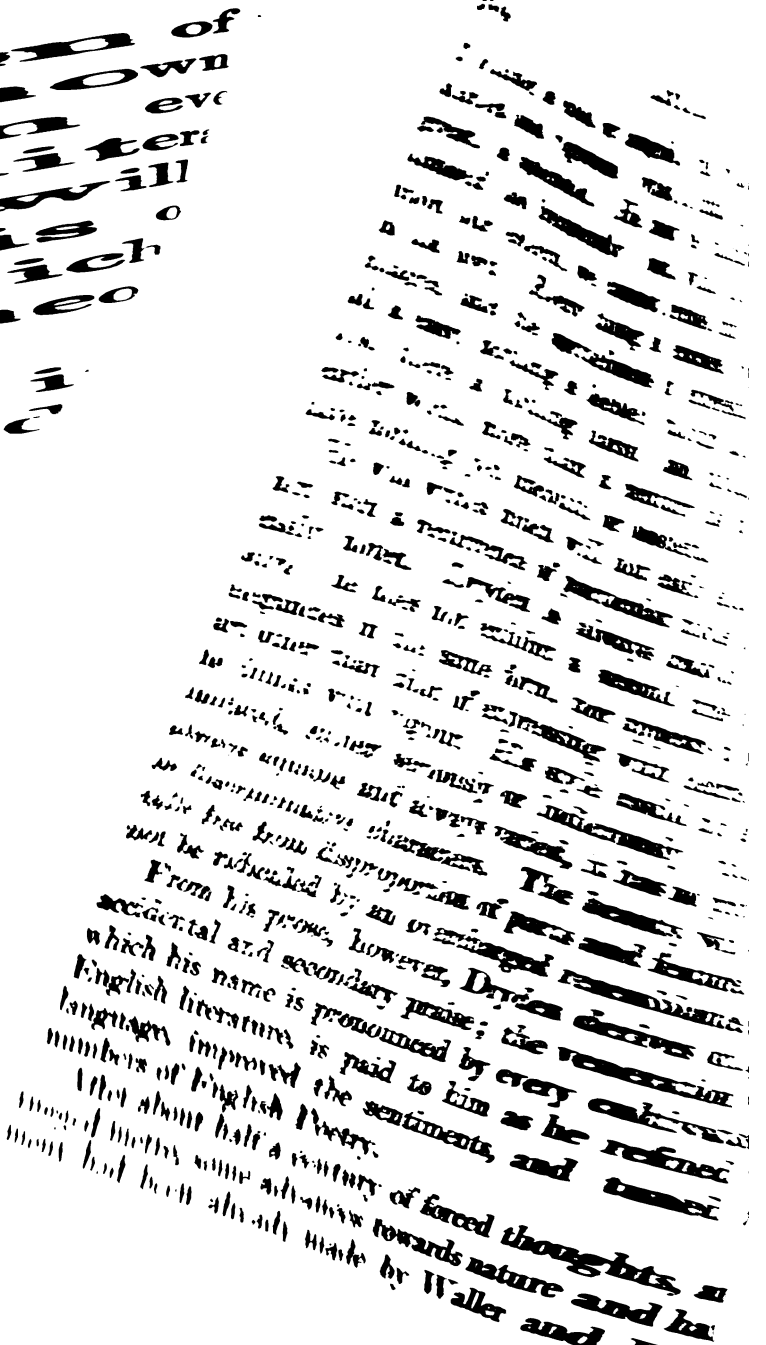

; they had shewn that long discourses in rhyme v more pleasing when they were broken into cou- s, and that verse consisted not only in the num- but the arrangement of syllables.

But though they did much, who can deny that y left much to do? Their works were not many, r were their minds of very ample comprehension. ore examples of more modes of composition were cessary for the establishment of regularity, and the troduction of propriety in word and thought.

Every language of a learned nation necessarily di- ides itself into diction scholastick and popular, grave nd familiar, elegant and gross: and from a nice dis- inction of these different parts arises a great part of he beauty of style. But if we except a few minds, the favourites of nature, to whom their own original rectitude was in the place of rules, this delicacy of selection was little known to our authors; our speech lay before them in a heap of confusion, and every man took for every purpose what chance might offer him.

There was therefore before the time of Dryden no poetical diction, no system of words at once refined from the grossness of domestic use, and free from the harshness of terms appropriated to particular arts. Words too familiar, or too remote, defeat the purpose of a poet. From those sounds which we hear on small or on coarse occasions, we do not easily receive strong impressions, or delightful images; and words to which we are nearly strangers, whenever they occur, draw that attention on themselves which they should transmit to things.

Those happy combinations of words which distin-

guish poetry from prose had been rarely attempted; we had few elegances or flowers of speech; the roses had not yet been plucked from the bramble; or different colours had not been joined to enliven one another.

It may be doubted whether Waller and Denham could have overborne the prejudices which had long prevailed, and which even then were sheltered by the protection of Cowley. The new versification, as it was called, may be considered as owing its establishment to Dryden; from whose time it is apparent that English poetry has had no tendency to relapse to its former savageness.

The affluence and comprehension of our language is very illustriously displayed in our poetical translations of Ancient Writers; a work which the French seem to relinquish in despair, and which we were long unable to perform with dexterity. Ben Jonson thought it necessary to copy Horace almost word by word; Feltham, his contemporary and adversary, considers it as indispensably requisite in a translation to give line for line. It is said that Sandys, whom Dryden calls the best versifier of the last age, has struggled hard to comprise every book of his English Metamorphoses in the same number of verses with the original. Holyday had nothing in view but to shew that he understood his author, with so little regard to the grandeur of his diction, or the volubility of his numbers, that his metres can hardly be called verses; they cannot be read without reluctance, nor will the labour always be rewarded by understanding them. Cowley saw that such copyers

were a servile race; he asserted his liberty, and spread his wings so boldly that he left his authors. It was reserved for Dryden to fix the limits of poetical liberty, and give us just rules and examples of translation.

When languages are formed upon different principles, it is impossible that the same modes of expression should always be elegant in both. While they run on together, the closest translation may be considered as the best; but when they divaricate, each must take its natural course. Where correspondence cannot be obtained, it is necessary to be content with something equivalent. "Translation therefore," says Dryden, "is not so loose as paraphrase, nor so close as metaphrase."

All polished languages have different styles; the concise, the diffuse, the lofty, and the humble. In the proper choice of style consists the resemblance which Dryden principally exacts from the translator. He is to exhibit his author's thoughts in such a dress of diction as the author would have given them, had his language been English: rugged magnificence is not to be softened; hyperbolical ostentation is not to be repressed; nor sententious affectation to have its point blunted. A translator is to be like his author; it is not his business to excel him.

The reasonableness of these rules seems sufficient for their vindication; and the effects produced by observing them were so happy, that I know not whether they were ever opposed but by Sir Edward Sherburne, a man whose learning was greater than his powers of poetry, and who, being better qualified to give the meaning than the spirit of Seneca,

has introduced his version of three tragedies by a defence of close translation. The authority of Horace, which the new translators cited in defence of their practice, he has, by a judicious explanation, taken fairly from them; but reason wants not Horace to support it.

It seldom happens that all the necessary causes concur to any great effect: will is wanting to power, or power to will, or both are impeded by external obstructions. The exigencies in which Dryden was condemned to pass his life are reasonably supposed to have blasted his genius, to have driven out his works in a state of immaturity, and to have intercepted the full-blown elegance which longer growth would have supplied.

Poverty, like other rigid powers, is sometimes too hastily accused. If the excellence of Dryden's works was lessened by his indigence, their number was increased; and I know not how it will be proved, that if he had written less he would have written better; or that indeed he would have undergone the toil of an author, if he had not been solicited by something more pressing than the love of praise.

But, as is said by his Sebastian,

> What had been, is unknown; what is, appears.

We know that Dryden's several productions were so many successive expedients for his support; his plays were therefore often borrowed; and his poems were almost all occasional.

In an occasional performance no height of excellence can be expected from any mind, however fer-

tile in itself, and however stored with acquisitions. He whose work is general and arbitrary has the choice of his matter, and takes that which his inclination and his studies have best qualified him to display and decorate. He is at liberty to delay his publication till he has satisfied his friends and himself, till he has reformed his first thoughts by subsequent examination, and polished away those faults which the precipitance of ardent composition is likely to leave behind it. Virgil is related to have poured out a great number of lines in the morning, and to have passed the day in reducing them to fewer.

The occasional poet is circumscribed by the narrowness of his subject. Whatever can happen to man has happened so often, that little remains for fancy or invention. We have been all born; we have most of us been married; and so many have died before us, that our deaths can supply but few materials for a poet. In the fate of Princes the publick has an interest; and what happens to them of good or evil, the poets have always considered as business for the Muse. But after so many inauguratory gratulations, nuptial hymns, and funeral dirges, he must be highly favoured by nature, or by fortune, who says any thing not said before. Even war and conquest, however splendid, suggest no new images; the triumphal chariot of a victorious monarch can be decked only with those ornaments that have graced his predecessors.

Not only matter but time is wanting. The poem must not be delayed till the occasion is forgotten. The lucky moments of animated imagination cannot

be attended; elegances and illustrations cannot be multiplied by gradual accumulation; the composition must be dispatched, while conversation is yet busy, and admiration fresh; and haste is to be made, lest some other event should lay hold upon mankind.

Occasional compositions may however secure to a writer the praise both of learning and facility; for they cannot be the effect of long study, and must be furnished immediately from the treasures of the mind.

The death of Cromwell was the first publick event which called forth Dryden's poetical powers. His heroick stanzas have beauties and defects; the thoughts are vigorous, and, though not always proper, shew a mind replete with ideas; the numbers are smooth; and the diction, if not altogether correct, is elegant and easy.

Davenant was perhaps at this time his favourite author, though Gondibert never appears to have been popular; and from Davenant he learned to please his ear with the stanza of four lines alternately rhymed.

Dryden very early formed his versification; there are in this early production no traces of Donne's or Jonson's ruggedness; but he did not so soon free his mind from the ambition of forced conceits. In his verses on the Restoration, he says of the King's exile,

> He, toss'd by Fate—
> Could taste no sweets of youth's desir'd age,
> But found his life too true a pilgrimage.

And afterwards, to shew how virtue and wisdom are increased by adversity, he makes this remark:

Well might the antient poets then confer
On Night the honour'd name of *counsellor*.
Since, struck with rays of prosperous fortune blind,
We light alone in dark afflictions find.

His praise of Monk's dexterity comprises such a cluster of thoughts unallied to one another, as will not elsewhere be easily found:

'Twas Monk, whom Providence design'd to loose
Those real bonds false freedom did impose.
The blessed saints that watch'd this turning scene
Did from their stars with joyful wonder lean,
To see small clues draw vastest weights along,
Not in their bulk, but in their order strong.
Thus pencils can by one slight touch restore
Smiles to that changed face that wept before.
With ease such fond chimæras we pursue,
As fancy frames for fancy to subdue;
But, when ourselves to action we betake,
It shuns the mint like gold that chymists make:
How hard was then his task, at once to be
What in the body natural we see!
Man's Architect distinctly did ordain
The charge of muscles, nerves, and of the brain,
Through viewless conduits spirits to dispense
The springs of motion from the seat of sense.
'Twas not the hasty product of a day,
But the well-ripen'd fruit of wise delay.
He, like a patient angler, ere he strook,
Would let them play awhile upon the hook.
Our healthful food the stomach labours thus,
At first embracing what it straight doth crush.
Wise leeches will not vain receipts obtrude,
While growing pains pronounce the humours crude;
Deaf to complaints, they wait upon the ill,
Till some safe crisis authorize their skill.

He had not yet learned, indeed he never learned well, to forbear the improper use of mythology. After having rewarded the Heathen deities for their care,

> With Alga who the sacred altar strows?
> To all the sea-gods Charles an offering owes;
> A bull to thee, Portunus, shall be slain;
> A ram to you, ye Tempests of the Main.

He tells us, in the language of religion,

> Prayer storm'd the skies, and ravish'd Charles from thence,
> As Heaven itself is took by violence.

And afterwards mentions one of the most awful passages of Sacred History.

Other conceits there are, too curious to be quite omitted; as,

> For by example most we sinn'd before,
> And, glass-like, clearness mix'd with frailty bore.

How far he was yet from thinking it necessary to found his sentiments on Nature, appears from the extravagance of his fictions and hyperboles:

> The winds, that never moderation knew,
> Afraid to blow too much, too faintly blew;
> Or, out of breath with joy, could not enlarge
> Their straiten'd lungs.—

> It is no longer motion cheats your view;
> As you meet it, the land approacheth you;
> The land returns, and in the white it wears
> The marks of penitence, and sorrow bears.

I know not whether this fancy, however little be its value, was not borrowed. A French poet read to Malherbe some verses, in which he represents France as moving out of its place to receive the king. "Though this," said Malherbe, "was in my time, I do not remember it."

His poem on the *Coronation* has a more even tenour of thought. Some lines deserve to be quoted.

> You have already quench'd sedition's brand:
> And zeal, that burnt it, only warms the land;
> The jealous sects that durst not trust their cause
> So far from their own will as to the laws,
> Him for their umpire and their synod take,
> And their appeal alone to Cæsar make.

Here may be found one particle of that old versification, of which, I believe, in all his works, there is not another:

> Nor is it duty, or our hope alone,
> Creates that joy, but full *fruition*,

In the verses to the Lord Chancellor Clarendon, two years afterwards, is a conceit so hopeless at the first view, that few would have attempted it; and so successfully laboured, that though at last it gives the reader more perplexity than pleasure, and seems hardly worth the study that it costs, yet it must be valued as a proof of a mind at once subtle and comprehensive;

> In open prospect nothing bounds our eye,
> Until the earth seems join'd unto the sky:
> So in this hemisphere our utmost view
> Is only bounded by our king and you

Our sight is limited where you are join'd,
And beyond that no farther Heaven can find.
So well your virtues do with his agree,
That, though your orbs of different greatness be,
Yet both are for each other's use dispos'd,
His to enclose, and yours to be enclos'd.
Nor could another in your room have been,
Except an emptiness had come between.

The comparison of the Chancellor to the Indies leaves all resemblance too far behind it:

And as the Indies were not found before
Those rich perfumes which from the happy shore
The winds upon their balmy wings convey'd,
Whose guilty sweetness first their world betray'd;
So by your counsels we are brought to view
A new and undiscover'd world in you.

There is another comparison, for there is little else in the poem, of which, though perhaps it cannot be explained into plain prosaick meaning, the mind perceives enough to be delighted, and readily forgives its obscurity, for its magnificence:

How strangely active are the arts of peace,
Whose restless motions less than wars do cease:
Peace is not freed from labour, but from noise;
And war more force, but not more pains employs.
Such is the mighty swiftness of your mind,
That, like the Earth's, it leaves our sense behind,
While you so smoothly turn and roll our sphere,
That rapid motion does but rest appear.
For as in nature's swiftness, with the throng
Of flying orbs while ours is borne along,
All seems at rest to the deluded eye,
Mov'd by the soul of the same harmony:

So, carry'd on by your unwearied care,
We rest in peace, and yet in motion share.

To this succeed four lines, which perhaps afford Dryden's first attempt at those penetrating remarks on human nature, for which he seems to have been peculiarly formed:

Let envy then those crimes within you see,
From which the happy never must be free;
Envy that does with misery reside,
The joy and the revenge of ruin'd pride.

Into this poem he seems to have collected all his powers; and after this he did not often bring upon his anvil such stubborn and unmalleable thoughts; but, as a specimen of his abilities to unite the most unsociable matter, he has concluded with lines, of which I think not myself obliged to tell the meaning.

Yet unimpair'd with labours, or with time,
Your age but seems to a new youth to climb.
Thus heavenly bodies do our time beget,
And measure change, but share no part of it:
And still it shall without a weight increase,
Like this new year, whose motions never cease.
For since the glorious course you have begun
Is led by Charles, as that is by the sun,
It must both weightless and immortal prove,
Because the centre of it is above.

In the *Annus Mirabilis* he returned to the quatrain, which from that time he totally quitted, perhaps from experience of its inconvenience, for he complains of its difficulty. This is one of his greatest attempts. He had subjects equal to his abilities, a great naval war, and the Fire of London. Battles

have always been described in heroick poetry; but a sea-fight and artillery had yet something of novelty. New arts are long in the world before poets describe them; for they borrow every thing from their predecessors, and commonly derive very little from nature or from life. Boileau was the first French writer that had ever hazarded in verse the mention of modern war, or the effects of gun powder. We, who are less afraid of novelty, had already possession of those dreadful images: Waller had described a sea-fight. Milton had not yet transferred the invention of fire-arms to the rebellious angels.

This poem is written with great diligence, yet does not fully answer the expectation raised by such subjects and such a writer. With the stanza of Davenant he has sometimes his vein of parenthesis, and incidental disquisition, and stops his narrative for a wise remark.

The general fault is, that he affords more sentiment than description, and does not so much impress scenes upon the fancy, as deduce consequences and make comparisons.

The initial stanzas have rather too much resemblance to the first lines of Waller's poem on the war with Spain; perhaps such a beginning is natural, and could not be avoided without affectation. Both Waller and Dryden might take their hint from the poem on the civil war of Rome, "Orbem jam totum," &c.

Of the King collecting his navy, he says,

> It seems as every ship their sovereign knows,
> His awful summons they so soon obey:

So hear the scaly herds when Proteus blows,
And so to pasture follow through the sea.

It would not be hard to believe that Dryden had written the two first lines seriously, and that some wag had added the two latter in burlesque. Who would expect the lines that immediately follow, which are indeed perhaps indecently hyperbolical, but certainly in a mode totally different?

To see this fleet upon the ocean move,
Angels drew wide the curtains of the skies;
And Heaven, as if there wanted lights above,
For tapers made two glaring comets rise.

The description of the attempt at Bergen will afford a very complete specimen of the descriptions in this poem:

And now approach'd their fleet from India, fraught
With all the riches of the rising sun:
And precious sand from Southern climates brought,
The fatal regions where the war begun.

Like hunted castors, conscious of their store,
Their way-laid wealth to Norway's coast they bring:
Then first the North's cold bosom spices bore,
And winter brooded on the Eastern spring.

By the rich scent we found our perfum'd prey,
Which, flank'd with rocks, did close in covert lie;
And round about their murdering cannon lay,
At once to threaten and invite the eye.

Fiercer than cannon, and than rocks more hard,
The English undertake th' unequal war:
Seven ships alone, by which the port is barr'd,
Besiege the Indies, and all Denmark dare.

These fight like husbands, but like lovers those:
These fain would keep, and those more fain enjoy:
And to such height their frantick passion grows,
That what both love, both hazard to destroy:

Amidst whole heaps of spices lights a ball,
And now their odours arm'd against them fly:
Some preciously by shatter'd porcelain fall,
And some by aromatick splinters die.

And though by tempests of the prize bereft,
In Heaven's inclemency some ease we find;
Our foes we vanquish'd by our valour left,
And only yielded to the seas and wind.

In this manner is the sublime too often mingled with the ridiculous. The Dutch seek a shelter for a wealthy fleet: this surely needed no illustration; yet they must fly, not like all the rest of mankind on the same occasion, but "like hunted castors;" and they might with strict propriety be hunted; for we winded them by our noses—their *perfumes* betrayed them. The *Husband* and the *Lover*, though of more dignity than the castor, are images too domestick to mingle properly with the horrors of war. The two quatrains that follow are worthy of the author.

The account of the different sensations with which the two fleets retired, when the night parted them, is one of the fairest flowers of English poetry:

The night comes on, we eager to pursue
The combat still, and they asham'd to leave:
Till the last streaks of dying day withdrew,
And doubtful moon-light did our rage deceive

In th' English fleet each ship resounds with joy,
And loud applause of their great leader's fame:
In fiery dreams the Dutch they still destroy,
And, slumbering, smile at the imagin'd flame.

Not so the Holland fleet, who, tir'd and done,
Stretch'd on their decks like weary oxen lie;
Faint sweats all down their mighty members run,
(Vast bulks, which little souls but ill supply).

In dreams they fearful precipices tread,
Or, shipwreck'd, labour to some distant shore;
Or, in dark churches, walk among the dead:
They wake with horror, and dare sleep no more.

It is a general rule in poetry, that all appropriated terms of art should be sunk in general expressions, because poetry is to speak an universal language. This rule is still stronger with regard to arts not liberal, or confined to few, and therefore far removed from common knowledge; and of this kind, certainly, is technical navigation. Yet Dryden was of opinion, that a sea-fight ought to be described in the nautical language; "and certainly," says he, "as those, who in a logical disputation keep to general terms, would hide a fallacy, so those who do it in any poetical description would veil their ignorance."

Let us then appeal to experience; for by experience at last we learn as well what will please as what will profit. In the battle, his terms seem to have been blown away; but he deals them liberally in the dock:

So here some pick out bullets from the side,
Some drive old *okum* thro' each *seam* and rift;
Their left-hand does the *calking-iron* guide,
The rattling *mallet* with the right they lift.

With boiling pitch another near at hand
(From friendly Sweden brought) the *seams in-stops:*
Which, well laid o'er, the salt-sea waves withstand,
And shake them from the rising beak in drops.

Some the *gall'd* ropes with dawby *marling* bind,
Or sear-cloth masts with strong *tarpawling* coats;
To try new *shrouds* one mounts into the wind,
And one below, their ease or stiffness notes.

I suppose there is not one term which every reader does not wish away.

His digression to the original and progress of navigation, with his prospect of the advancement which it shall receive from the Royal Society, then newly instituted, may be considered as an example seldom equalled of seasonable excursion and artful return.

One line, however, leaves me discontented; he says, that, by the help of the philosophers,

Instructed ships shall sail to quick commerce,
By which remotest regions are allied.—

Which he is constrained to explain in a note "by a more exact measure of longitude." It had better become Dryden's learning and genius to have laboured science into poetry, and have shewn, by explaining longitude, that verse did not refuse the ideas of philosophy.

His description of the Fire is painted by resolute meditation, out of a mind better formed to reason than to feel. The conflagration of a city, with all its tumults of concomitant distress, is one of the most dreadful spectacles which this world can offer to human eyes; yet it seems to raise little emotion in the breast of the poet; he watches the flame coolly

from street to street, with now a reflection, and now a simile, till at last he meets the King, for whom he makes a speech, rather tedious in a time so busy; and then follows again the progress of the fire.

There are, however, in this part some passages that deserve attention; as in the beginning;

> The diligence of trades and noiseful gain,
> And luxury, more late, asleep were laid;
> All was the Night's, and in her silent reign
> No sound the rest of Nature did invade
> In this deep quiet——

The expression "All was the Night's" is taken from Seneca, who remarks on Virgil's line,

> *Omnia noctis erant, placida composta quiete,*

that he might have concluded better,

> *Omnia noctis erant.*

The following quatrain is vigorous and animated:

> The ghosts of traytors from the bridge descend
> With bold fanatick spectres to rejoice;
> About the fire into a dance they bend,
> And sing their sabbath notes with feeble voice.

His prediction of the improvements which shall be made in the new city is elegant and poetical, and, with an event which Poets cannot always boast, has been happily verified. The poem concludes with a simile that might have better been omitted.

Dryden, when he wrote this poem, seems not yet fully to have formed his versification, or settled his system of propriety.

From this time he addicted himself almost wholly to the stage, "to which," says he, "my genius never much inclined me," merely as the most profitable market for poetry. By writing tragedies in rhyme, he continued to improve his diction and his numbers. According to the opinion of Harte, who had studied his works with great attention, he settled his principles of versification in 1676, when he produced the play of *Aureng Zebe;* and according to his own account of the short time in which he wrote *Tyrannick Love,* and the *State of Innocence,* he soon obtained the full effect of diligence, and added facility to exactness.

Rhyme has been so long banished from the theatre, that we know not its effect upon the passions of an audience; but it has this convenience, that sentences stand more independent on each other, and striking passages are therefore easily selected and retained. Thus the description of Night in the *Indian Emperor,* and the rise and fall of empire in the *Conquest of Granada,* are more frequently repeated than any lines in *All for Love,* or *Don Sebastian.*

To search his plays for vigorous sallies and sententious elegancies, or to fix the dates of any little pieces which he wrote by chance, or by solicitation, were labour too tedious and minute.

His dramatick labours did not so wholly absorb his thoughts, but that he promulgated the laws of translation in a preface to the English Epistles of Ovid; one of which he translated himself, and another in conjunction with the Earl of Mulgrave.

Absalom and Achitophel is a work so well known, that particular criticism is superfluous. If it be considered as a poem political and controversial, it will be found to comprise all the excellencies of which the subject is susceptible; acrimony of censure, elegance of praise, artful delineation of characters, variety and vigour of sentiment, happy turns of language, and pleasing harmony of numbers; and all these raised to such a height as can scarcely be found in any other English composition.

It is not, however, without faults; some lines are inelegant or improper, and too many are irreligiously licentious. The original structure of the poem was defective; allegories drawn to great length will always break; Charles could not run continually parallel with David.

The subject had likewise another inconvenience; it admitted little imagery or description; and a long poem of mere sentiments easily becomes tedious; though all the parts are forcible, and every line kindles new rapture, the reader if not relieved by the interposition of something that sooths the fancy, grows weary of admiration, and defers the rest.

As an approach to historical truth was necessary, the action and catastrophe were not in the poet's power; there is therefore an unpleasing disproportion between the beginning and the end. We are alarmed by a faction formed out of many sects various in their principles, but agreeing in their purpose of mischief, formidable for their numbers, and strong by their supports, while the King's friends are few and weak. The chiefs on either part are set

forth to view: but when expectation is at the height, the King makes a speech, and

Henceforth a series of new times began.

Who can forbear to think of an enchanted castle, with a wide moat and lofty battlements, walls of marble and gates of brass, which vanishes at once into air, when the destined knight blows his horn before it?

In the second part, written by Tate, there is a long insertion, which, for poignancy of satire, exceeds any part of the former. Personal resentment, though no laudable motive to satire, can add great force to general principles. Self-love is a busy prompter.

The Medal, written upon the same principles with *Absalom and Achitophel*, but upon a narrower plan, gives less pleasure, though it discovers equal abilities in the writer. The superstructure cannot extend beyond the foundation; a single character or incident cannot furnish as many ideas, as a series of events, or multiplicity of agents. This poem therefore, since time has left it to itself, is not much read, nor perhaps generally understood; yet it abounds with touches both of humorous and serious satire. The picture of a man whose propensions to mischief are such, that his best actions are but inability of wickedness, is very skilfully delineated and strongly coloured:

Power was his aim; but, thrown from that pretence,
The wretch turn'd loyal in his own defence,
And malice reconcil'd him to his Prince.
Him, in the anguish of his soul, he serv'd;
Rewarded faster still than he deserved;

Behold him now exalted into trust;
His counsels oft convenient, seldom just.
Ev'n in the most sincere advice he gave,
He had a grudging still to be a knave.
The frauds he learnt in his fanatick years,
Made him uneasy in his lawful gears:
At least as little honest as he cou'd;
And, like white witches, mischievously good.
To this first bias, longingly, he leans;
And rather would be great by wicked means.

The *Threnodia*, which, by a term I am afraid neither authorized nor analogical, he calls *Augustalis*, is not among his happiest productions. Its first and obvious defect is the irregularity of its metre, to which the ears of that age, however, were accustomed. What is worse, it has neither tenderness nor dignity, it is neither magnificent nor pathetick. He seems to look round him for images which he cannot find, and what he has he distorts by endeavouring to enlarge them. "He is," he says, "petrified with grief;" but the marble sometimes relents, and trickles in a joke.

The sons of art all med'cines try'd,
And every noble remedy apply'd:
With emulation each essay'd
His utmost skill; *nay, more, they pray'd:*
Was never losing game with better conduct play'd.

He had been a little inclined to merriment before upon the prayers of a nation for their dying sovereign; nor was he serious enough to keep Heathen fables out of his religion:

With him th' innumerable crowd of armed prayers
Knock'd at the gates of Heaven, and knock'd aloud;
The first well-meaning rude petitioners.
All for his life assail'd the throne,
All would have brib'd the skies by offering up their own.
So great a throng not Heaven itself could bar;
'Twas almost borne by force *as in the giants war*.
The pray'rs, at least, for his reprieve were heard:
His death, like Hezekiah's, was deferr'd.

There is throughout the composition a desire of splendour without wealth. In the conclusion he seems too much pleased with the prospect of the new reign to have lamented his old master with much sincerity.

He did not miscarry in this attempt for want of skill either in lyrick or elegiack poetry. His poem on the death of Mrs. Killigrew is undoubtedly the noblest ode that our language ever has produced. The first part flows with a torrent of enthusiasm. "Fervet immensusque ruit." All the stanzas indeed are not equal. An imperial crown cannot be one continued diamond; the gems must be held together by some less valuable matter.

In his first ode for Cecilia's day, which is lost in the splendour of the second, there are passages which would have dignified any other poet. The first stanza is vigorous and elegant, though the word *diăpason* is too technical, and the rhymes are too remote from one another.

From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began:
When Nature underneath a heap of jarring atoms lay,

And could not heave her head,
The tuneful voice was heard from high,
Arise ye more than dead.
Then cold and hot, and moist and dry,
In order to their stations leap,
And musick's power obey.
From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began;
From harmony to harmony
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in man.

The conclusion is likewise striking; but it includes an image so awful in itself, that it can owe little to poetry; and I could wish the antithesis of *musick untuning* had found some other place.

As from the power of sacred lays
The spheres began to move,
And sung the great Creator's praise
To all the bless'd above:

So, when the last and dreadful hour
This crumbling pageant shall devour,
The trumpet shall be heard on high,
The dead shall live, the living die,
And musick shall untune the sky.

Of his skill in elegy he has given a specimen in his *Eleonora*, of which the following lines discover their author:

Though all these rare endowments of the mind
Were in a narrow space of life confin'd,
The figure was with full perfection crown'd;
Though not so large an orb, as truly round:

As when in glory, through the publick place,
The spoils of conquer'd nations were to pass,
And but one day for triumph was allow'd,
The consul was constrain'd his pomp to crowd;
And so the swift procession hurry'd on,
That all, tho' not distinctly, might be shown;
So, in the straiten'd bounds of life confin'd,
She gave but glimpses of her glorious mind:
And multitudes of virtues pass'd along;
Each pressing foremost in the mighty throng,
Ambitious to be seen, and then make room
For greater multitudes that were to come.
Yet unemploy'd no minute slipp'd away;
Moments were precious in so short a stay.
The haste of Heaven to have her was so great,
That some were single acts, though each complete;
And every act stood ready to repeat.

This piece, however, is not without its faults; there is so much likeness in the initial comparison, that there is no illustration. As a king would be lamented, Eleonora was lamented:

As, when some great and gracious monarch dies,
Soft whispers, first, and mournful murmurs rise
Among the sad attendants; then the sound
Soon gathers voice, and spreads the news around,
Through town and country, till the dreadful blast
Is blown to distant colonies at last;
Who then, perhaps, were offering vows in vain,
For his long life, and for his happy reign:
So slowly, by degrees, unwilling Fame
Did matchless Eleonora's fate proclaim,
Till publick as the loss the news became.

This is little better than to say in praise of a shrub, that it is as green as a tree; or of a brook, that it waters a garden, as a river waters a country.

Dryden confesses that he did not know the lady whom he celebrates: the praise being therefore inevitably general, fixes no impression upon the reader, nor excites any tendency to love, nor much desire of imitation. Knowledge of the subject is to the poet what durable materials are to the architect.

The *Religio Laici*, which borrows its title from the *Religio Medici* of Browne, is almost the only work of Dryden which can be considered as a voluntary effusion; in this, therefore, it might be hoped, that the full effulgence of his genius would be found. But unhappily the subject is rather argumentative than poetical: he intended only a specimen of metrical disputation:

> And this unpolish'd rugged verse I chose
> As fittest for discourse, and nearest prose.

This, however, is a composition of great excellence in its kind, in which the familiar is very properly diversified with the solemn, and the grave with the humorous; in which metre has neither weakened the force, nor clouded the perspicuity of argument; nor will it be easy to find another example equally happy of this middle kind of writing, which, though prosaick in some parts, rises to high poetry in others, and neither towers to the skies, nor creeps along the ground.

Of the same kind, or not far distant from it, is the *Hind and Panther*, the longest of all Dryden's origi-

nal poems; an allegory intended to comprize and to decide the controversy between the Romanists and Protestants. The scheme of the work is injudicious and incommodious; for what can be more absurd, than that one beast should counsel another to rest her faith upon a pope and council? He seems well enough skilled in the usual topicks of argument, endeavours to shew the necessity of an infallible judge, and reproaches the Reformers with want of unity; but is weak enough to ask, why, since we see without knowing how, we may not have an infallible judge without knowing where?

The *Hind* at one time is afraid to drink at the common brook, because she may be worried; but, walking home with the *Panther*, talks by the way of the Nicene Fathers, and at last declares herself to be the Catholick Church.

This absurdity was very properly ridiculed in the *City Mouse* and *Country Mouse* of Montague and Prior; and in the detection and censure of the incongruity of the fiction chiefly consists the value of their performance, which, whatever reputation it might obtain by the help of temporary passions, seems, to readers almost a century distant, not very forcible or animated.

Pope, whose judgment was perhaps a little bribed by the subject, used to mention this poem as the most correct specimen of Dryden's versification. It was indeed written when he had completely formed his manner, and may be supposed to exhibit, negligence excepted, his deliberate and ultimate scheme of metre.

We may therefore reasonably infer, that he did not approve the perpetual uniformity which confines the sense to couplets, since he has broken his lines in the initial paragraph.

> A milk-white Hind, immortal and unchang'd,
> Fed on the lawns, and in the Forest rang'd:
> Without unspotted, innocent within,
> She fear'd no danger, for she knew no sin.
> Yet had she oft been chac'd with horns and hounds,
> And Scythian shafts, and many winged wounds
> Aim'd at her heart; was often forc'd to fly,
> And doom'd to death, though fated not to die.

These lines are lofty, elegant, and musical, notwithstanding the interruption of the pause, of which the effect is rather increase of pleasure by variety, than offence by ruggedness.

To the first part it was his intention, he says, "to give the majestick turn of heroick poesy;" and perhaps he might have executed his design not unsuccessfully, had not an opportunity of satire, which he cannot forbear, fallen sometimes in his way. The character of a Presbyterian, whose emblem is the *Wolf*, is not very heroically majestick:

> More haughty than the rest, the wolfish race
> Appear with belly gaunt and famish'd face:
> Never was so deform'd a beast of grace.
> His ragged tail betwixt his legs he wears,
> Close clapp'd for shame; but his rough crest he rears,
> And pricks up his predestinating ears.

His general character of the other sorts of beasts

that never go to church, though spritely and keen, has, however, not much of heroick poesy:

These are the chief; to number o'er the rest,
And stand like Adam naming every beast,
Were weary work; nor will the Muse describe
A slimy-born, and sun-begotten tribe,
Who, far from steeples and their sacred sound,
In fields their sullen conventicles found.
These gross, half-animated lumps I leave;
Nor can I think what thoughts they can conceive;
But, if they think at all, 'tis sure no higher
Than matter, put in motion, may aspire;
Souls that can scarce ferment their mass of clay,
So drossy, so divisible are they,
As would but serve pure bodies for allay:
Such souls as shards produce, such beetle things
As only buz to Heaven with evening wings;
Strike in the dark, offending but by chance;
Such are the blindfold blows of ignorance.
They know no being, and but hate a name;
To them the Hind and Panther are the same.

One more instance, and that taken from the narrative part, where style was more in his choice, will shew how steadily he kept his resolution of heroick dignity.

For when the herd, suffic'd, did late repair
To ferny heaths and to their forest laire,
She made a mannerly excuse to stay,
Proffering the Hind to wait her half the way;
That, since the sky was clear, an hour of talk
Might help her to beguile the tedious walk.
With much good-will the motion was embrac'd,
To chat awhile on their adventures past:

Nor had the grateful Hind so soon forgot
Her friend and fellow-sufferer in the plot.
Yet, wondering how of late she grew estrang'd,
Her forehead cloudy and her count'nance chang'd,
She thought this hour th' occasion would present
To learn her secret cause of discontent,
Which well she hop'd might be with ease redress'd,
Considering her a well-bred civil beast,
And more a gentlewoman than the rest.
After some common talk what rumours ran,
The lady of the spotted muff began.

The second and third parts he professes to have reduced to diction more familiar and more suitable to dispute and conversation; the difference is not, however, very easily perceived; the first has familiar, and the two others have sonorous, lines. The original incongruity runs through the whole: the king is now *Cæsar*, and now the *Lion;* and the name *Pan* is given to the Supreme Being.

But when this constitutional absurdity is forgiven, the poem must be confessed to be written with great smoothness of metre, a wide extent of knowledge, and an abundant multiplicity of images; the controversy is embellished with pointed sentences, diversified by illustrations, and enlivened by sallies of invective. Some of the facts to which allusions are made are now become obscure, and perhaps there may be many satirical passages little understood.

As it was by its nature a work of defiance, a composition which would naturally be examined with the utmost acrimony of criticism, it was probably laboured with uncommon attention; and there are, indeed, few negligencies in the subordinate parts.

The original impropriety, and the subsequent unpopularity of the subject, added to the ridiculousness of its first elements, has sunk it into neglect; but it may be usefully studied, as an example of poetical ratiocination, in which the argument suffers little from the metre.

In the poem on *the Birth of the Prince of Wales*, nothing is very remarkable but the exorbitant adulation, and that insensibility of the precipice on which the king was then standing, which the laureat apparently shared with the rest of the courtiers. A few months cured him of controversy, dismissed him from court, and made him again a play-wright and translator.

Of Juvenal there had been a translation by Stapylton, and another by Holiday; neither of them is very poetical. Stapylton is more smooth; and Holiday's is more esteemed for the learning of his notes. A new version was proposed to the poets of that time, and undertaken by them in conjunction. The main design was conducted by Dryden, whose reputation was such that no man was unwilling to serve the Muses under him.

The general character of this translation will be given, when it is said to preserve the wit, but to want the dignity of the original. The peculiarity of Juvenal is a mixture of gaiety and stateliness, of pointed sentences and declamatory grandeur. His points have not been neglected; but his grandeur none of the band seemed to consider as necessary to be imitated, except Creech, who undertook the thirteenth satire. It is therefore perhaps possible to give

a better representation of that great satirist, eve in those parts which Dryden himself has translate some passages excepted, which will never be e celled.

With Juvenal was published Persius, translate wholly by Dryden. This work, though like all th other productions of Dryden it may have shinin parts, seems to have been written merely for wages, i an uniform mediocrity, without any eager endeavou after excellence, or laborious effort of the mind.

There wanders an opinion among the readers c poetry, that one of these satires is an exercise of th school. Dryden says, that he once translated it a school; but not that he preserved or published th juvenile performance.

Not long afterwards he undertook perhaps th most arduous work of its kind, a translation of Vi gil, for which he had shewn how well he was quali fied by his version of the Pollio, and two episode one of Nisus and Euryalus, the other of Mezentiu and Lausus.

In the comparison of Homer and Virgil, the dis criminative excellence of Homer is elevation an comprehension of thought, and that of Virgil i grace and splendour of diction. The beauties o Homer are therefore difficult to be lost, and thos of Virgil difficult to be retained. The massy trunl of sentiment is safe by its solidity, but the blossom of elocution easily drop away. The author, having the choice of his own images, selects those which h can best adorn; the translator must, at all hazards follow his original, and express thoughts which per-

haps he would not have chosen. When to this primary difficulty is added the inconvenience of a language so much inferior in harmony to the Latin, it cannot be expected that they who read the Georgicks and the Æneid should be much delighted with any version.

All these obstacles Dryden saw, and all these he determined to encounter. The expectation of his work was undoubtedly great; the nation considered its honour as interested in the event. One gave him the different editions of his author, and another helped him in the subordinate parts. The arguments of the several books were given him by Addison.

The hopes of the publick were not disappointed. He produced, says Pope, "the most noble and spirited translation that I know in any language." It certainly excelled whatever had appeared in English, and appears to have satisfied his friends, and, for the most part, to have silenced his enemies. Milbourne, indeed, a clergyman, attacked it; but his outrages seem to be the ebullitions of a mind agitated by stronger resentment than bad poetry can excite, and previously resolved not to be pleased.

His criticism extends only to the Preface, Pastorals, and Georgicks; and, as he professes to give his antagonist an opportunity of reprisal, he has added his own version of the first and fourth Pastorals, and the first Georgick. The world has forgotten his book; but, since his attempt has given him a place in literary history, I will preserve a specimen of his criticism, by inserting his remarks on

the invocation before the first Georgick, and of his poetry, by annexing his own version.

Ver. 1.

" What makes a plenteous harvest, when to turn
The fruitful soil, and when to sow the corn.

It's *unlucky*, they say, *to stumble at the threshold:* but what has a *plenteous harvest* to do here? Virgil would not pretend to prescribe *rules* for *that* which depends not on the *husbandman's* care, but the *disposition of Heaven* altogether. Indeed, the *plenteous crop* depends somewhat on the *good method of tillage;* and where the *land's* ill-manur'd, the *corn*, without a miracle, can be but *indifferent;* but the *harvest* may be *good*, which is its *properest* epithet, tho' the *husbandman's skill* were never so *indifferent.* The next *sentence* is *too literal:*—and *when to plough* had been *Virgil's* meaning, and intelligible to every body; and *when to sow the corn*, is a needless *addition.*"

Ver. 3.

" The care of sheep, of oxen, and of kine,
And when to geld the lambs, and shear the swine,

would as well have fallen under the *cura boum, qui cultus habendo sit pecori*, as Mr. D.'s *deduction* of particulars."

Ver. 5.

" The birth and genius of the frugal bee
I sing, Mæcenas, and I sing to thee.

But where did *experientia* ever signify *birth and genius?* or what ground was there for such a

figure in this place? How much more manly is Mr. Ogylby's version?"

" What makes rich grounds, in what celestial signs
'Tis good to plough, and marry elms with vines:
What best fits cattle, what with sheep agrees,
And several arts improving frugal bees;
I sing, Mæcenas.

Which four lines, though faulty enough, are yet much more to the purpose than Mr. D.'s six."

Ver. 22.

" From fields and mountains to my song repair.

For *patrium linquens nemus, saltusque Lycæi*— Very well explained!"

Ver. 23, 24.

" Inventor Pallas, of the fattening oil,
Thou founder of the plough, and ploughman's toil!

Written as if *these* had been *Pallas's invention.*" The *ploughman's toil*'s impertinent."

Ver. 25.

—— " The shroud-like cypress——

Why *shroud-like?* Is a *cypress* pulled up by the *roots*, which the *sculpture* in the *last Eclogue* fills *Silvanus's* hand with, so very like a *shroud?* Or did not Mr. D. think of that kind of *cypress* used often for *scarves and hatbands* at funerals formerly, or for *widows' vails*, &c.? if so, 'twas a *deep, good thought.*"

Ver. 26.

——————" That wear
The royal honours, and increase the year.

What's meant by *increasing the year?* Did the *gods* or *goddesses* add more *months,* or *days,* or *hours,* to it? Or how can *arva tueri* signify to *wear rural honours?* Is this to *translate,* or *abuse* an *author?* The next *couplet* is borrowed from Ogylby, I suppose, because *less to the purpose* than ordinary."

Ver. 33.

" The patron of the world, and Rome's peculiar guard.

Idle, and none of Virgil's, no more than the sense of the *precedent couplet;* so again, *he interpolates Virgil* with that and *the round circle of the year to guide powerful of blessings, which thou strew'st around;* a ridiculous *Latinism,* and an *impertinent addition;* indeed the whole *period* is but one piece of *absurdity* and *nonsense,* as those who lay it with the *original* must find."

Ver. 42, 43.

" And Neptune shall resign the fasces of the sea.

Was he *consul* or *dictator* there?

" And wat'ry virgins for thy bed shall strive.

Both absurd *interpolations.*"

Ver. 47, 48.

" Where in the void of Heaven a place is free.

Ah, happy D——n, *were* that place *for thee!*

But where is *that void?* Or, what does our *translator* mean by it? He knows what Ovid says *God*

did to prevent such a *void* in Heaven; perhaps this was then forgotten: but Virgil talks more sensibly."

Ver. 49.

" The scorpion ready to receive thy laws.

No, he would not then have *gotten out of his way* so fast."

Ver. 56.

" Though Proserpine affects her silent seat.

What made *her* then so *angry* with *Ascalaphus*, for preventing her return? She was now mus'd to *Patience* under the *determinations of Fate*, rather than *fond* of her *residence*."

Ver. 61, 62, 63.

" Pity the poet's and the ploughman's cares,
Interest thy greatness in our mean affairs,
And use thyself betimes to hear our prayers.

Which is such a wretched *perversion* of Virgil's *noble thought* as Vicars would have blushed at; but Mr. Ogylby makes us some amends, by his better lines:

" O wheresoe'er thou art, from thence incline,
And grant assistance to my bold design!
Pity, with me, poor husbandmen's affairs,
And now, as if translated, hear our prayers.

This is *sense*, and *to the purpose:* the other, poor *mistaken stuff*."

Such were the strictures of Milbourne, who found few abettors, and of whom it may be reasonably

imagined, that many who favoured his design were ashamed of his insolence.

When admiration had subsided, the translation was more coolly examined, and found, like all others, to be sometimes erroneous, and sometimes licentious. Those who could find faults, thought they could avoid them; and Dr. Brady attempted in blank verse a translation of the Æneid, which, when dragged into the world, did not live long enough to cry. I have never seen it; but that such a version there is, or has been, perhaps some old catalogue informed me.

With not much better success, Trapp, when his Tragedy and his Prelections had given him reputation, attempted another blank version of the Æneid; to which, notwithstanding the slight regard with which it was treated, he had afterwards perseverance enough to add the Eclogues and Georgicks. His book may continue its existence as long as it is the clandestine refuge of school-boys.

Since the English ear has been accustomed to the mellifluence of Pope's numbers, and the diction of poetry has become more splendid, new attempts have been made to translate Virgil; and all his works have been attempted by men better qualified to contend with Dryden. I will not engage myself in an invidious comparison by opposing one passage to another; a work of which there would be no end, and which might be often offensive without use.

It is not by comparing line with line that the merit of great works is to be estimated, but by their general effects and ultimate result. It is easy to note a weak

line, and write one more vigorous in its place; to find a happiness of expression in the original, and transplant it by force into the version: but what is given to the parts may be subducted from the whole, and the reader may be weary, though the critick may commend. Works of imagination excel by their allurement and delight; by their power of attracting and detaining the attention. That book is good in vain, which the reader throws away. He only is the master, who keeps the mind in pleasing captivity; whose pages are perused with eagerness, and in hope of new pleasure are perused again; and whose conclusion is perceived with an eye of sorrow, such as the traveller casts upon departing day.

By his proportion of this predomination I will consent that Dryden should be tried; of this, which, in opposition to reason, makes Ariosto the darling and the pride of Italy; of this, which, in defiance of criticism, continues Shakspeare the sovereign of the drama.

His last work was his *Fables*, in which he gave us the first example of a mode of writing which the Italians call *refaccimento*, a renovation of ancient writers, by modernizing their language. Thus the old poem of *Boiardo* has been new dressed by Domenichi and Berni. The works of Chaucer, upon which this kind of rejuvenescence has been bestowed by Dryden, require little criticism. The tale of the Cock seems hardly worth revival; and the story of *Palamon and Arcite*, containing an action unsuitable to the times in which it is placed, can hardly be suffered to pass without censure of the hyperbolical commendation which Dryden has given it in the

general Preface, and in a poetical Dedication, a piece where his original fondness of remote conceits seems to have revived.

Of the three pieces borrowed from Boccace, *Sigismunda* may be defended by the celebrity of the story. *Theodore and Honoria*, though it contains not much moral, yet afforded opportunities of striking description. And *Cymon* was formerly a tale of such reputation, that, at the revival of letters, it was translated into Latin by one of the Beroalds.

Whatever subjects employed his pen, he was still improving our measures and embellishing our language.

In this volume are interspersed some short original poems, which, with his prologues, epilogues, and songs, may be comprised in Congreve's remark, that even those, if he had written nothing else, would have entitled him to the praise of excellence in his kind.

One composition must however be distinguished. The ode for *St. Cecilia's Day*, perhaps the last effort of his poetry, has been always considered as exhibiting the highest flight of fancy, and the exactest nicety of art. This is allowed to stand without a rival. If indeed there is any excellence beyond it, in some other of Dryden's works that excellence must be found. Compared with the ode on *Killigrew*, it may be pronounced perhaps superiour in the whole; but without any single part equal to the first stanza of the other.

It is said to have cost Dryden a fortnight's labour; but it does not want its negligences: some of the lines are without correspondent rhymes; a defect,

which I never detected but after an acquaintance of many years, and which the enthusiasm of the writer might hinder him from perceiving.

His last stanza has less emotion than the former; but it is not less elegant in the diction. The conclusion is vicious; the musick of *Timotheus*, which *raised a mortal to the skies*, had only a metaphorical power; that of *Cecilia*, which *drew an angel down*, had a real effect: the crown therefore could not reasonably be divided.

In a general survey of Dryden's labours, he appears to have a mind very comprehensive by nature, and much enriched with acquired knowledge. His compositions are the effects of a vigorous genius operating upon large materials.

The power that predominated in his intellectual operations, was rather strong reason than quick sensibility. Upon all occasions that were presented, he studied rather than felt, and produced sentiments not such as Nature enforces, but meditation supplies. With the simple and elemental passions, as they spring separate in the mind, he seems not much acquainted; and seldom describes them but as they are complicated by the various relations of society, and confused in the tumults and agitations of life.

What he says of Love may contribute to the explanation of his character:

> Love various minds does variously inspire;
> It stirs in gentle bosoms gentle fire,
> Like that of incense on the altar laid;
> But raging flames tempestuous souls invade:
> A fire which every windy passion blows,
> With pride it mounts, or with revenge it glows.

Dryden's was not one of the *gentle bosoms:* Love, as it subsists in itself, with no tendency but to the person loved, and wishing only for correspondent kindness; such Love as shuts out all other interest; the Love of the Golden Age, was too soft and subtle to put his faculties in motion. He hardly conceived it but in its turbulent effervescence with some other desires; when it was inflamed by rivalry, or obstructed by difficulties: when it invigorated ambition, or exasperated revenge.

He is therefore, with all his variety of excellence, not often pathetick; and had so little sensibility of the power of effusions purely natural, that he did not esteem them in others. Simplicity gave him no pleasure; and for the first part of his life he looked on Otway with contempt, though at last, indeed very late, he confessed that in his play *there* was *Nature, which is the chief beauty.*

We do not always know our own motives. I am not certain whether it was not rather the difficulty which he found in exhibiting the genuine operations of the heart, than a servile submission to an injudicious audience, that filled his plays with false magnificence. It was necessary to fix attention; and the mind can be captivated only by recollection, or by curiosity; by reviving natural sentiments, or impressing new appearances of things: sentences were readier at his call than images; he could more easily fill the ear with some splendid novelty, than awaken those ideas that slumber in the heart.

The favourite exercise of his mind was ratiocination; and, that argument might not be too soon at an end, he delighted to talk of liberty and necessity,

destiny and contingence; these he discusses in the language of the school with so much profundity, that the terms which he uses are not always understood. It is indeed learning, but learning out of place.

When once he had engaged himself in disputation, thoughts flowed in on either side: he was now no longer at a loss; he had always objections and solutions at command; "verbaque provisam rem"—give him matter for his verse, and he finds without difficulty verse for his matter.

In Comedy, for which he professes himself not naturally qualified, the mirth which he excites will perhaps not be found so much to arise from any original humour, or peculiarity of character nicely distinguished and diligently pursued, as from incidents and circumstances, artifices and surprizes; from jests of action rather than of sentiment. What he had of humorous or passionate, he seems to have had not from nature, but from other poets; if not always as a plagiary, at least as an imitator.

Next to argument, his delight was in wild and daring sallies of sentiment, in the irregular and eccentrick violence of wit. He delighted to tread upon the brink of meaning, where light and darkness begin to mingle; to approach the precipice of absurdity, and hover over the abyss of unideal vacancy. This inclination sometimes produced nonsense, which he knew; as,

> Move swiftly, sun, and fly a lover's pace,
> Leave weeks and months behind thee in thy race.
> Amariel flies
> To guard thee from the demons of the air;
> My flaming sword above them to display,
> All keen, and ground upon the edge of day.

And sometimes it issued in absurdities, of which perhaps he was not conscious:

Then we upon our orb's last verge shall go,
And see the ocean leaning on the sky;
From thence our rolling neighbours we shall know,
And on the lunar world securely pry.

These lines have no meaning; but may we not say, in imitation of Cowley on another book,

'Tis so like *sense* 'twill serve the turn as well?

This endeavour after the grand and the new, produced many sentiments either great or bulky, and many images either just or splendid:

I am as free as Nature first made man,
Ere the base laws of servitude began,
When wild in woods the noble savage ran.

—'Tis but because the Living death ne'er knew,
They fear to prove it as a thing that's new:
Let me th' experiment before you try,
I 'll show you first how easy 'tis to die.

—There with a forest of their darts he strove,
And stood like *Capaneus* defying Jove,
With his broad sword the boldest beating down,
While Fate grew pale lest he should win the town,
And turn'd the iron leaves of his dark book
To make new dooms, or mend what it mistook.

—I beg no pity for this mouldering clay;
For if you give it burial, there it takes
Possession of your earth;
If burnt, and scatter'd in the air, the winds
That strew my dust diffuse my royalty,
And spread me o'er your clime, for where one atom
Of mine shall light, know there Sebastian reigns.

Of these quotations the two first may be allowed to be great, the two latter only tumid.

Of such selection there is no end. I will add only a few more passages; of which the first, though it may perhaps not be quite clear in prose, is not too obscure for poetry, as the meaning that it has is noble*:

No, there is a necessity in Fate,
Why still the brave bold man is fortunate;
He keeps his object ever full in sight;
And that assurance holds him firm and right;
True, 'tis a narrow way that leads to bliss,
But right before there is no precipice;
Fear makes men look aside, and so their footing miss.

Of the images which the two following citations afford, the first is elegant, the second magnificent; whether either be just, let the reader judge:

What precious drops are these,
Which silently each other's track pursue,
Bright as young diamonds in their infant dew?
——Resign your castle——
—Enter, brave Sir; for, when you speak the word,
The gates shall open of their own accord;
The genius of the place its Lord shall meet,
And bow its towery forehead at your feet.

These bursts of extravagance, Dryden calls the "Dalilahs" of the Theatre; and owns that many noisy lines of *Maximin and Almanzor* call out for

* I cannot see why Johnson has thought there was any want of clearness in this passage even in prose. Addison has given us almost the very same thought in very good prose. "If we look forward to him [the Deity] for help, we shall never be in danger of falling down those precipices which our imagination is apt to create. Like those who walk upon a line, if we keep our eye fixed upon one point, we may step forward securely; whereas an imprudent or cowardly glance on either side will infallibly destroy us." Spectator, No. 615. J. B.

vengeance upon him: "but I knew," says he, "that they were bad enough to please, even when I wrote them." There is surely reason to suspect that he pleased himself as well as his audience; and that these, like the harlots of other men, had his love, though not his approbation.

He had sometimes faults of a less generous and splendid kind. He makes, like almost all other poets, very frequent use of mythology, and sometimes connects religion and fable too closely without distinction.

He descends to display his knowledge with pedantick ostentation; as when, in translating Virgil, he says, "tack to the larboard,"—and "veer starboard;" and talks, in another work, of "virtue spooming before the wind."—His vanity now and then betrays his ignorance:

> They Nature's king through Nature's opticks view'd;
> Revers'd, they view'd him lessen'd to their eyes.

He had heard of reversing a telescope, and unluckily reverses the object.

He is sometimes unexpectedly mean. When he describes the Supreme Being as moved by prayer to stop the Fire of London, what is his expression?

> A hollow crystal pyramid he takes,
> In firmamental waters dipp'd above,
> Of this a broad *extinguisher* he makes,
> And *hoods* the flames that to their quarry strove.

When he describes the Last Day, and the decisive tribunal, he intermingles this image:

> When rattling bones together fly,
> From the four qua rters of the sky.

It was indeed never in his power to resist the temptation of a jest. In his Elegy on Cromwell:

No sooner was the Frenchman's cause embrac'd,
Than the *light Monsieur* the *grave Don* outweigh'd;
His fortune turn'd the scale ———

He had a vanity, unworthy of his abilities, to shew, as may be suspected, the rank of the company with whom he lived, by the use of French words, which had then crept into conversation; such as *fraicheur* for *coolness*, *fougue* for *turbulence*, and a few more, none of which the language has incorporated or retained. They continue only where they stood first, perpetual warnings to future innovators.

These are his faults of affectation; his faults of negligence are beyond recital. Such is the unevenness of his compositions, that ten lines are seldom found together without something of which the reader is ashamed. Dryden was no rigid judge of his own pages; he seldom struggled after supreme excellence, but snatched in haste what was within his reach; and when he could content others, was himself contented. He did not keep present to his mind an idea of pure perfection; nor compare his works, such as they were, with what they might be made. He knew to whom he should be opposed. He had more musick than Waller, more vigour than Denham, and more nature than Cowley; and from his contemporaries he was in no danger. Standing therefore in the highest place, he had no care to rise by contending with himself; but while there was no name above his own, was willing to enjoy fame on the easiest terms.

He was no lover of labour. What he thought sufficient, he did not stop to make better; and al-

lowed himself to leave many parts unfinished, in confidence that the good lines would overbalance the bad. What he had once written, he dismissed from his thoughts; and I believe there is no example to be found of any correction or improvement made by him after publication. The hastiness of his productions might be the effect of necessity; but his subsequent neglect could hardly have any other cause than impatience of study.

What can be said of his versification, will be little more than a dilatation of the praise given it by Pope:

> Waller was smooth; but Dryden taught to join
> The varying verse, the full resounding line,
> The long majestick march, and energy divine.

Some improvements had been already made in English numbers; but the full force of our language was not yet felt; the verse that was smooth was commonly feeble. If Cowley had sometimes a finished line, he had it by chance. Dryden knew how to chuse the flowing and the sonorous words; to vary the pauses, and adjust the accents; to diversify the cadence, and yet preserve the smoothness of his metre.

Of Triplets and Alexandrines, though he did not introduce the use, he established it. The Triplet has long subsisted among us. Dryden seems not to have traced it higher than to Chapman's Homer; but it is to be found in Phaer's Virgil, written in the reign of Mary; and in Hall's Satires, published five years before the death of Elizabeth.

The Alexandrine was, I believe, first used by Spenser, for the sake of closing his stanza with a fuller sound. We had a longer measure of fourteen syl-

lables, into which the Æneid was translated by Phaer, and other works of the ancients by other writers; of which Chapman's Iliad was, I believe, the last.

The two first lines of Phaer's third Æneid will exemplify this measure:

When Asia's state was overthrown, and Priam's kingdom stout,
All guiltless, by the power of gods above was rooted out.

As these lines had their break, or *cæsura*, always at the eighth syllable, it was thought, in time, commodious to divide them: and quatrains of lines, alternately, consisting of eight and six syllables, make the most soft and pleasing of our lyrick measures; as,

Relentless Time, destroying power,
Which stone and brass obey,
Who giv'st to every flying hour
To work some new decay.

In the Alexandrine, when its power was once felt, some poems, as Drayton's Polyolbion, were wholly written; and sometimes the measures of twelve and fourteen syllables were interchanged with one another. Cowley was the first that inserted the Alexandrine at pleasure among the heroick lines of ten syllables, and from him Dryden professes to have adopted it.*

* This is an error. The Alexandrine inserted among heroick lines of ten syllables is found in many of the writers of Queen Elizabeth's reign. It will be sufficient to mention Hall, who has already been quoted for the use of the triplet.

As tho' the staring world hanged on his sleeve,
Whenever he smiles to laugh, and when he sighs to grieve.
Hall's Sat. Book 1. Sat. 7.

Take another instance.

For shame! or better write or Labeo write none.
Hall's Sat. Book 2. Sat. 1. J. B.

The Triplet and Alexandrine are not universally approved. Swift always censured them, and wrote some lines to ridicule them. In examining their propriety, it is to be considered that the essence of verse is regularity, and its ornament is variety. To write verse, is to dispose syllables and sounds harmonically by some known and settled rule; a rule however lax enough to substitute similitude for identity, to admit change without breach of order, and to relieve the ear without disappointing it. Thus a Latin hexameter is formed from dactyls and spondees differently combined; the English heroick admits of acute or grave syllables variously disposed. The Latin never deviates into seven feet, or exceeds the number of seventeen syllables; but the English Alexandrine breaks the lawful bounds, and surprises the reader with two syllables more than he expected.

The effect of the Triplet is the same: the ear has been accustomed to expect a new rhyme in every couplet; but is on a sudden surprized with three rhymes together, to which the reader could not accommodate his voice, did he not obtain notice of the change from the braces of the margins. Surely there is something unskilful in the necessity of such mechanical direction.

Considering the metrical art simply as a science, and consequently excluding all casualty, we must allow that Triplets and Alexandrines, inserted by caprice, are interruptions of that constancy to which science aspires. And though the variety which they produce may very justly be desired, yet, to make our poetry exact, there ought to be some stated mode of admitting them.

But till some such regulation can be formed, I wish them still to be retained in their present state. They are sometimes grateful to the reader, and sometimes convenient to the poet. Fenton was of opinion, that Dryden was too liberal, and Pope too sparing, in their use.

The rhymes of Dryden are commonly just, and he valued himself for his readiness in finding them; but he is sometimes open to objection.

It is the common practice of our poets to end the second line with a weak or grave syllable:

> Together o'er the Alps methinks we fly,
> Fill'd with ideas of fair Italy.

Dryden sometimes puts the weak rhyme in the first:

> Laugh all the powers that favour *tyranny*,
> And all the standing army of the sky.

Sometimes he concludes a period or paragraph with the first line of a couplet, which, though the French seem to do it without irregularity, always displeases in English poetry.

The Alexandrine, though much his favourite, is not always very diligently fabricated by him. It invariably requires a break at the sixth syllable; a rule which the modern French poets never violate, but which Dryden sometimes neglected:

> And with paternal thunder vindicates his throne.

Of Dryden's works it was said by Pope, that he "could select from them better specimens of every mode of poetry than any other English writer could supply." Perhaps no nation ever produced a writer that enriched his language with such variety of models. To him we owe the improvement, perhaps

the completion of our metre, the refinement of our language, and much of the correctness of our sentiments. By him we were taught "sapere et fari," to think naturally and express forcibly. Though Davies has reasoned in rhyme before him, it may be perhaps maintained that he was the first who joined argument with poetry. He shewed us the true bounds of a translator's liberty. What was said of Rome, adorned by Augustus, may be applied by an easy metaphor to English poetry embellished by Dryden, "lateritiam invenit, marmoream reliquit." He found it brick, and he left it marble.

THE invocation before the Georgicks is here inserted from Mr. Milbourne's version, that, according to his own proposal, his verses may be compared with those which he censures.

What makes the richest *tilth*, beneath what signs
To *plough*, and when to match your *elms and vines*;
What care with *flocks*, and what with *herds* agrees,
And all the management of frugal *bees*;
I sing, Mæcenas! Ye immensely clear,
Vast orbs of light which guide the rolling year;
Bacchus, and mother *Ceres*, if by you
We fatt'ning *corn* for hungry *mast* pursue,
If, taught by you, we first the *cluster* prest,
And *thin cold streams* with *spritely juice* refresht;
Ye *fauns*, the present *numens* of the field,
Wood nymphs and *fauns*, your kind assistance yield;
Your gifts I sing! and thou, at whose fear'd stroke
From rending earth the fiery *courser* broke,
Great *Neptune*, O assist my artful song!
And thou to whom the woods and groves belong,
Whose snowy heifers on her flow'ry plains
In mighty herds the *Cæan Isle* maintains!

Pan, happy shepherd, if thy cares divine
E'er to improve thy *Mœnalus* incline,
Leave thy *Lycœan wood* and *native grove*,
And with thy lucky smiles our work approve!
Be *Pallas* too, sweet oil's inventor, kind;
And he who first the crooked *plough* design'd!
Sylvanus, god of all the woods, appear,
Whose hands a new-drawn tender *cypress* bear!
Ye *gods* and *goddesses*, who e'er with love
Would guard our pastures and our fields improve!
You, who new plants from unknown lands supply,
And with condensing clouds obscure the sky,
And drop 'em softly thence in fruitful showers;
Assist my enterprize, ye gentler powers!
And thou, great Cæsar! though we know not yet
Among what gods thou 'lt fix thy lofty seat;
Whether thou 'lt be the kind *tutelar god*
Of thy own *Rome;* or with thy awful nod
Guide the vast world, while thy great hand shall bear
The fruits and seasons of the turning year,
And thy bright brows thy mother's myrtles wear;
Whether thou 'lt all the boundless ocean sway,
And sea-men only to thyself shall pray,
Thule, the farthest island, kneel to thee,
And, that thou may'st her son by marriage be,
Tethys will for the happy purchase yield
To make a *dowry* of her wat'ry field;
Whether thou 'lt add to Heaven a *brighter sign*,
And o'er the *summer months* serenely shine;
Where between *Cancer* and *Erigone*,
There yet remains a spacious *room* for thee;
Where the hot *Scorpion* too his arms declines,
And more to thee than half his *arch* resigns;
Whate'er thou 'lt be; for sure the realms below
No just pretence to thy command can show:
No such ambition sways thy vast desires,
Though *Greece* her own *Elysian Fields* admires.

And now, at last, contented *Proserpine*
Can all her mother's earnest prayers decline.
Whate'er thou'lt be, O guide our gentle course;
And with thy smiles our bold attempts enforce;
With me th' unknowing *rustics'* wants relieve,
And, though on earth, our sacred vows receive!

Mr. DRYDEN, having received from Rymer his "Remarks on the Tragedies of the last Age," wrote observations on the blank leaves; which, having been in the possession of Mr. Garrick, are by his favour communicated to the publick, that no particle of Dryden may be lost.

"That we may the less wonder why pity and terror are not now the only springs on which our tragedies move, and that Shakspeare may be more excused, Rapin confesses that the French tragedies now all run on the *tendre;* and gives the reason, because love is the passion which most predominates in our souls, and that therefore the passions represented become insipid, unless they are conformable to the thoughts of the audience. But it is to be concluded, that this passion works not now amongst the French so strongly as the other two did amongst the antients. Amongst us, who have a stronger genius for writing, the operations from the writing are much stronger; for the raising of Shakspeare's passions is more from the excellency of the words and thoughts, than the justness of the occasion; and if he has been able to pick single occasions, he has never founded the whole reasonably: yet, by the genius of poetry in writing, he has succeeded.

"Rapin attributes more to the *dictio*, that is, to

the words and discourse of a tragedy, than Aristotle has done, who places them in the last rank of beauties; perhaps, only last in order, because they are the last product of the design, of the disposition or connection of its parts; of the characters, of the manners of those characters, and of the thoughts proceeding from those manners. Rapin's words are remarkable: 'Tis not the admirable intrigue, the surprising events, and extraordinary incidents, that make the beauty of a tragedy; 'tis the discourses, when they are natural and passionate: so are Shakspeare's.

"The parts of a poem, tragick or heroick, are,

"1. The fable itself.

"2. The order or manner of its contrivance, in relation of the parts to the whole.

"3. The manners, or decency, of the characters, in speaking or acting what is proper for them, and proper to be shewn by the poet.

"4. The thoughts which express the manners.

"5. The words which express those thoughts.

"In the last of these Homer excels Virgil; Virgil all other antient poets; and Shakspeare all modern poets.

"For the second of these, the order: the meaning is, that a fable ought to have a beginning, middle, and an end, all just and natural; so that that part, *e. g.* which is the middle, could not naturally be the beginning or end, and so of the rest: all depend on one another, like the links of a curious chain. If terror and pity are only to be raised, certainly this author follows Aristotle's

rules, and Sophocles' and Euripides' example: but joy may be raised too, and that doubly, either by seeing a wicked man punished, or a good man at last fortunate; or perhaps indignation, to see wickedness prosperous, and goodness depressed: both these may be profitable to the end of tragedy, reformation of manners; but the last improperly, only as it begets pity in the audience: though Aristotle, I confess, places tragedies of this kind in the second form.

"He who undertakes to answer this excellent critique of Mr. Rymer, in behalf of our English poets against the Greek, ought to do it in this manner: either by yielding to him the greatest part of what he contends for, which consists in this, that the μύθος, *i. e.* the design and conduct of it, is more conducing in the Greeks to those ends of tragedy, which Aristotle and he propose, namely, to cause terrour and pity; yet the granting this does not set the Greeks above the English poets.

"But the answerer ought to prove two things: first, that the fable is not the greatest master-piece of a tragedy, though it be the foundation of it.

"Secondly, that other ends as suitable to the nature of tragedy may be found in the English, which were not in the Greek.

"Aristotle places the fable first; not *quoad dignitatem, sed quoad fundamentum:* for a fable, never so movingly contrived to those ends of his, pity and terrour, will operate nothing on our affections, except the characters, manners, thoughts, and words, are suitable.

"So that it remains for Mr. Rymer to prove, that

in all those, or the greatest part of them, we are inferior to Sophocles and Euripides: and this he has offered at, in some measure; but, I think, a little partially to the ancients.

"For the fable itself, 'tis in the English more adorned with episodes, and larger than in the Greek poets; consequently more diverting. For, if the action be but one, and that plain, without any counterturn of design or episode, *i. e.* underplot, how can it be so pleasing as the English, which have both underplot and a turned design, which keeps the audience in expectation of the catastrophe? whereas in the Greek poets we see through the whole design at first.

"For the characters, they are neither so many nor so various in Sophocles and Euripides, as in Shakspeare and Fletcher; only they are more adapted to those ends of tragedy which Aristotle commends to us, pity and terrour.

"The manners flow from the characters, and consequently must partake of their advantages and disadvantages.

"The thoughts and words, which are the fourth and fifth beauties of tragedy, are certainly more noble and more poetical in the English than in the Greek, which must be proved by comparing them, somewhat more equitably than Mr. Rymer has done.

"After all, we need not yield that the English way is less conducing to move pity and terrour, because they often shew virtue oppressed and vice punished: where they do not both, or either, they are not to be defended.

"And if we should grant that the Greeks performed this better, perhaps it may admit of dispute, whether pity and terrour are either the prime, or at least the only ends of tragedy.

"'Tis not enough that Aristotle has said so; for Aristotle drew his models of tragedy from Sophocles and Euripides; and, if he had seen ours, might have changed his mind. And chiefly we have to say (what I hinted on pity and terrour, in the last paragraph save one), that the punishment of vice and reward of virtue are the most adequate ends of tragedy, because most conducing to good example of life. Now, pity is not so easily raised for a criminal (and the ancient tragedy always represents its chief person such) as it is for an innocent man; and the suffering of innocence and punishment of the offender is of the nature of English tragedy: contrarily, in the Greek, innocence is unhappy often, and the offender escapes. Then we are not touched with the sufferings of any sort of men so much as of lovers; and this was almost unknown to the ancients: so that they neither administered poetical justice, of which Mr. Rymer boasts, so well as we; neither knew they the best common-place of pity, which is love.

"He therefore unjustly blames us for not building on what the ancients left us; for it seems, upon consideration of the premises, that we have wholly finished what they began.

"My judgment on this piece is this: that it is extremely learned, but that the author of it is better read in the Greek than in the English poets: that all writers ought to study this critique, as the best

account I have ever seen of the ancients: that the model of tragedy he has here given is excellent, and extremely correct; but that it is not the only model of all tragedy, because it is too much circumscribed in plot, characters, &c.; and, lastly, that we may be taught here justly to admire and imitate the ancients, without giving them the preference with this author, in prejudice to our own country.

"Want of method in this excellent treatise makes the thoughts of the author sometimes obscure.

"His meaning, that pity and terrour are to be moved, is, that they are to be moved as the means conducing to the ends of tragedy, which are pleasure and instruction.

"And these two ends may be thus distinguished. The chief end of the poet is to please; for his immediate reputation depends on it.

"The great end of the poem is to instruct, which is performed by making pleasure the vehicle of that instruction; for poesy is an art, and all arts are made to profit. *Rapin.*

"The pity, which the poet is to labour for, is for the criminal, not for those or him whom he has murdered, or who have been the occasion of the tragedy. The terrour is likewise in the punishment of the same criminal; who, if he be represented too great an offender, will not be pitied: if altogether innocent, his punishment will be unjust.

"Another obscurity is, where he says, Sophocles perfected tragedy by introducing the third actor; that is, he meant, three kinds of action; one compa-

ny singing, or speaking; another playing on the musick; a third dancing.

"To make a true judgment in this competition betwixt the Greek poets and the English, in tragedy:

"Consider, first, how Aristotle has defined a tragedy. Secondly, what he assigns the end of it to be. Thirdly, what he thinks the beauties of it. Fourthly, the means to attain the end proposed.

"Compare the Greek and English tragick poets justly, and without partiality, according to those rules.

"Then, secondly, consider whether Aristotle has made a just definition of tragedy; of its parts, of its ends, and of its beauties; and whether he, having not seen any others but those of Sophocles, Euripides, &c. had or truly could determine what all the excellencies of tragedy are, and wherein they consist.

"Next, shew in what ancient tragedy was deficient: for example, in the narrowness of its plots, and fewness of persons; and try whether that be not a fault in the Greek poets; and whether their excellency was so great, when the variety was visibly so little; or whether what they did was not very easy to do.

"Then make a judgment on what the English have added to their beauties: as, for example, not only more plot, but also new passions; as, namely, that of love, scarcely touched on by the ancients, except in this one example of Phædra, cited by Mr. Rymer; and in that how short they were of Fletcher!

"Prove also that love, being an heroick passion,

is fit for tragedy, which cannot be denied, because of the example alleged of Phædra; and how far Shakspeare has outdone them in friendship, &c.

"To return to the beginning of this enquiry; consider if pity and terrour be enough for tragedy to move: and I believe, upon a true definition of tragedy, it will be found that its work extends farther, and that it is to reform manners, by a delightful representation of human life in great persons, by way of dialogue. If this be true, then not only pity and terrour are to be moved, as the only means to bring us to virtue, but generally love to virtue, and hatred to vice; by shewing the rewards of one, and punishments of the other; at least, by rendering virtue always amiable, though it be shewn unfortunate; and vice detestable, though it be shewn triumphant.

"If, then, the encouragement of virtue and discouragement of vice be the proper ends of poetry in tragedy, pity and terror, though good means, are not the only. For all the passions, in their turns, are to be set in a ferment: as joy, anger, love, fear, are to be used as the poet's commonplaces; and a general concernment for the principal actors is to be raised, by making them appear such in their characters, their words, and actions, as will interest the audience in their fortunes.

"And if, after all, in a larger sense, pity comprehends this concernment for the good, and terrour includes detestation for the bad, then let us consider whether the English have not answered this end of tragedy as well as the ancients, or perhaps better.

" And here Mr. Rymer's objections against these plays are to be impartially weighed, that we may see whether they are of weight enough to turn the balance against our countrymen.

" 'Tis evident those plays, which he arraigns, have moved both those passions in a high degree upon the stage.

" To give the glory of this away from the poet, and to place it upon the actors, seems unjust.

" One reason is, because whatever actors they have found, the event has been the same; that is, the same passions have been always moved: which shews, that there is something of force and merit in the plays themselves, conducing to the design of raising these two passions: and suppose them ever to have been excellently acted, yet action only adds grace, vigour, and more life, upon the stage; but cannot give it wholly where it is not first. But, secondly, I dare appeal to those who have never seen them acted, if they have not found these two passions moved within them: and if the general voice will carry it, Mr. Rymer's prejudice will take off his single testimony.

" This, being matter of fact, is reasonably to be established by this appeal; as, if one man says it is night, when the rest of the world conclude it to be day, there needs no farther argument against him, that it is so.

" If he urge, that the general taste is depraved, his arguments to prove this can at best but evince that our poets took not the best way to raise those passions; but experience proves against him, that

those means, which they have used, have been successful, and have produced them.

"And one reason of that success is, in my opinion, this; that Shakspeare and Fletcher have written to the genius of the age and nation in which they lived; for though nature, as he objects, is the same in all places, and reason too the same; yet the climate, the age, the disposition of the people, to whom a poet writes, may be so different, that what pleased the Greeks would not satisfy an English audience.

"And if they proceeded upon a foundation of truer reason to please the Athenians, than Shakspeare and Fletcher to please the English, it only shews that the Athenians were a more judicious people; but the poet's business is certainly to please the audience.

"Whether our English audience have been pleased hitherto with acorns, as he calls it, or with bread, is the next question; that is, whether the means which Shakspeare and Fletcher have used, in their plays, to raise those passions before named, be better applied to the ends by the Greek poets than by them. And perhaps we shall not grant him this wholly: let it be granted that a writer is not to run down with the stream, or to please the people by their usual methods, but rather to reform their judgments, it still remains to prove that our theatre needs this total reformation.

"The faults, which he has found in their designs, are rather wittily aggravated in many places than reasonably urged; and as much may be returned on the Greeks, by one who were as witty as himself.

" 2. They destroy not, if they are granted, the foundation of the fabrick: only take away from the beauty of the symmetry: for example, the faults in the character of the King, in King and No-king, are not, as he makes them, such as render him detestable, but only imperfections which accompany human nature, and are for the most part excused by the violence of his love; so that they destroy not our pity or concernment for him: this answer may be applied to most of his objections of that kind.

" And Rollo committing many murders, when he is answerable but for one, is too severely arraigned by him; for, it adds to our horror and detestation of the criminal: and poetick justice is not neglected neither; for we stab him in our minds for every offence which he commits; and the point, which the poet is to gain on the audience, is not so much in the death of an offender as the raising an horror of his crimes.

" That the criminal should neither be wholly guilty, nor wholly innocent, but so participating of both as to move both pity and terrour, is certainly a good rule, but not perpetually to be observed; for that were to make all tragedies too much alike; which objection he foresaw, but has not fully answered.

" To conclude, therefore; if the plays of the ancients are more correctly plotted, ours are more beautifully written. And, if we can raise passions as high on worse foundations, it shews our genius in tragedy is greater; for in all other parts of it the English have manifestly excelled them."

THE original of the following letter is preserved in the Library at Lambeth, and was kindly imparted to the publick by the reverend Dr. Vyse.

Copy of an original Letter from John Dryden, Esq. to his sons in Italy, from a MS. in the Lambeth Library, marked N° 933, p. 56.

(*Superscribed*)

'Al illustrissimo Sig^re
Carlo Dryden Camariere
d'Honore A. S. S.

In Roma.

'Franca per Mantoua.

'Sept. the 3d, our style.

'Dear Sons,

'Being now at Sir William Bowyer's in the country, I cannot write at large, because I find myself somewhat indisposed with a cold, and am thick of hearing, rather worse than I was in town. I am glad to find, by your letter of July 26th, your style, that you are both in health; but wonder you should think me so negligent as to forget to give you an account of the ship in which your parcel is to come. I have written to you two or three letters concerning it, which I have sent by safe hands, as I told you, and doubt not but you have them before this can arrive to you. Being out of town, I have forgotten the ship's name, which your mother will enquire, and put it into her letter, which is joined with mine. But the master's name I remember: he is called Mr. Ralph Thorp; the ship is bound to Leghorn, consigned to Mr. Peter and Mr. Thomas Ball, merchants. I am of

your opinion, that by Tonson's means almost all our letters have miscarried for this last year. But, however, he has missed of his design in the Dedication, though he had prepared the book for it; for in every figure of Æneas he has caused him to be drawn like King William, with a hooked nose. After my return to town, I intend to alter a play of Sir Robert Howard's, written long since, and lately put by him into my hands; 'tis called *The Conquest of China by the Tartars*. It will cost me six weeks study, with the probable benefit of an hundred pounds. In the mean time I am writing a song for St. Cecilia's Feast, who, you know, is the patroness of musick. This is troublesome, and no way beneficial; but I could not deny the Stewards of the Feast, who came in a body to me to desire that kindness, one of them being Mr. Bridgman, whose parents are your mother's friends. I hope to send you thirty guineas between Michaelmass and Christmass, of which I will give you an account when I come to town. I remember the counsel you give me in your letter; but dissembling, though lawful in some cases, is not my talent; yet, for your sake, I will struggle with the plain openness of my nature, and keep in my just resentments against that degenerate order. In the mean time I flatter not myself with any manner of hopes, but do my duty, and suffer for God's sake; being assured, beforehand, never to be rewarded, though the times should alter. Towards the latter end of this month of September, Charles will begin to recover his health, according to his nativity, which myself, I am sure is true, and all things

happened accordingly to the very time that I predicted them: I hope at the same time to recover more health, according to my age. Remember me to poor Harry, whose prayers I earnestly desire. My Virgil succeeds in the world beyond its desert or my expectation. You know the profits might have been more; but neither my conscience nor my honour would suffer me to take them: but I never can repent of my constancy, since I am thoroughly persuaded of the justice of the cause for which I suffer. It has pleased God to raise up many friends to me amongst my enemies, though they who ought to have been my friends are negligent of me. I am called to dinner, and cannot go on with this letter, which I desire you to excuse; and am

"Your most affectionate father,

"JOHN DRYDEN."

END OF THE SIXTH VOLUME.

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